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MIKE SHAYNE



MYSTERY MAGAZINE
NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL

JUNE, 1971
VOL. 29, NO. 1

THE AIRPORT MURDER

by BRETT HALLIDAY

"You can tell me now," the girl told Mike Shayne. "If you do, you'll die nice and quick and easy. If not —" she shrugged — "you'll be begging for death long before it comes to you!"

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THE AIRPORT MURDER



A NEW COMPLETE MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL

*For one girl, a flight to home and happiness.
For the other, sudden, nameless death. Could
Mike Shayne break the sinister key of the
bag which held a one-way ticket to hell?*

by BRETT HALLIDAY



BEFORE THE BIG luxury airliner was more than five minutes out of New York on its way south to Miami Lucy Hamilton had noticed the girl in the seat just across the aisle.

For one thing she had a brand new, oversized soft leather shoulder bag that was twin to the one Lucy herself had bought the day before in an expensive Fifth Avenue Shop. That was curious enough in itself.

The salesgirl had solemnly assured Lucy she was purchasing a one-of-a kind item that would be a sensation of the Florida season. Mike Shayne's confidential secretary was conscious of a brief flash of annoyance at the store. She'd stretched her budget to make an impulse buy of the rather expensive bag.

Frustration was quickly replaced by concern in the warm hearted

Lucy, however. The girl across the aisle was obviously unwell. Her face was pale and her hands trembled where she clutched the arms of her seat. Her lips were set in a straight line as if she was trying to hold back a cry of pain.

When the signal to unfasten seat belts was given and the big jet had straightened out in its flight over the turbulent winter Atlantic five miles straight down, Lucy Hamilton got out of her seat and crossed the aisle.

"Is there anything I can do to help?" she asked with real concern in her voice.

The girl sat rigid. She hadn't even bothered to unfasten her own seat belt.

"I'm sorry," Lucy said. "I'm sitting right over there and it seemed to me you looked ill. Lots of people feel badly when they make a first time flight." She paused, at a loss how to continue. "I thought perhaps I could help in some way."

The girl's big black eyes moved then, as she seemed to focus on Lucy and realize for the first time that she was being spoken to. She opened her mouth, but for a moment no sound came out. Then she tried again.

"I'm all right," she said in a strangely harsh tone. Then: "Yes, I'm okay. But thank you."

"Oh," Lucy Hamilton said. "That's fine. I'm glad to hear it." She stood for a moment longer but the girl didn't say anything more or even

look at her. There was nothing for Lucy to do but return to her own seat.

A moment later one of the three attractive blonde stewardesses came down the aisle and stopped by Lucy's seat. "Is that girl across the aisle a friend of yours?" she asked in a low tone.

"Why no," Lucy replied. "I never saw her before. She just looked ill, and I asked if I could help. She didn't seem to want help though."

"Oh," the pretty airline girl said. "I'd hoped you were a friend. She looked awfully ill to me when she came aboard and I showed her to the seat. I think she needs a friend."

"I'll help you keep an eye on her," Lucy said.

When the stewardess moved away she looked across at the girl again. She still sat in the same stiff, unyielding pose with the seat belt fastened and staring straight ahead with blank, unseeing eyes.

"I don't care what she said," Lucy thought to herself. "That girl is ill. Either that or — yes, that's got to be it. Either she's ill or just plain frightened almost to death. That would account for it."

All through the rest of the non-stop flight south Lucy Hamilton herself couldn't get comfortable for worrying about the pretty dark-eyed girl.

The girl just sat there. She didn't smoke or accept the food and drink given to the other passengers. She didn't get out of the seat or even

move around. Watching her spoiled the pleasure of the flight completely for Lucy.

When the big plane settled onto the Miami runway and taxied to a stop Lucy Hamilton was right behind the dark girl at the exit ramp.

Actually the girl was walking with an odd, stiff gait as if she was half paralyzed by fear or pain and Lucy kept braced to assist her if she should start to fall or should faint.

The girl kept going across the short walk on the concrete landing strip and then up the long, sloping enclosed ramp to the upper level of the airport. She kept the handsome bag which had first attracted Lucy's attention clasped tightly to her chest with both arms, and held so high as to be just about tucked under her chin.

It was probably that which caused the heavy-set woman hurrying down the ramp in the other direction to make her mistake.

She spotted Lucy's bag, hung loosely over her shoulder, and actually ran up to her.

"Here," she said in a hoarse and heavily accented voice. "Here. Give. Give me."

She grabbed Lucy's bag with a sudden force that yanked the strap off her shoulder. Lucy Hamilton just managed to hang on to her property by making a sudden grab.

"What are you doing?" she said.

"Give," the woman said. She yanked again. "Here. Here. You now what to do." She tried to thrust

a similar bag at the startled and bewildered Lucy Hamilton.

At the same instant the girl from the plane turned and ran back down the ramp towards them, holding her own bag extended in front of her and still gripped in both hands. She seemed to be only half aware of what she was doing.

The stout woman yelled: "Oh, my God!" when she saw the girl coming; and then followed the words with a string of what was probably lurid profanity in a language Lucy couldn't make out. She tried to break away, but forgot to loosen her grip on Lucy's bag.

Lucy Hamilton was yanked off her feet against the woman's body, but managed somehow to retain her grip on the bag.

The black-eyed girl ran full force into the pair of them and then all were down on the sloping floor of the ramp in a hopeless confusion of arms, legs and identical brand new shoulder bags.

An elbow or knee — she never knew which — fetched Lucy Hamilton a crack on the temple with enough force to knock her dizzy and blur her vision. When she recovered the stout woman was on her feet and running back up the ramp as fast as her heavy legs would carry her.

The dark girl was lying face down across Lucy's body. One of her shoes was off and her mouth open against the cold tile of the floor.

Lucy Hamilton tried to push her

away, but the girl was heavy and inert.

Then Lucy saw Mike Shayne coming through the crowd towards where she lay. He reached down and got a big hand under each shoulder. A moment later she was on her feet, still holding to a new shoulder bag and leaning against Shayne, panting and trying to get her breath.

"What in God's name is going on here, Angel?" the big private detective was saying. "I just come down to meet my girl coming home from a shopping trip and I find you in a regular donnybrook with a couple of strangers."

"I don't know, Michael," she said as soon as she could. "I honestly don't know. Oh, that poor scared girl. Can't you help her?"

"There's plenty here to help her," Shayne said. "It's you I'm thinking about."

He was right enough. A regular crowd had gathered, just about blocking the entire ramp. The girl was still on the floor and a young officer in the brown uniform of a Dade County sheriff's deputy was leaning over her. Now the man looked up.

"Stand back, folks," he called. "Is there a doctor in the crowd?"

"A doctor?" Lucy said. "Oh, Michael, I knew something was wrong with the poor girl. Is she hurt?"

"Somebody go for a doctor," the deputy said. "Hurry now." To Lucy, "Not you miss. Did you say you know this woman?"

"Not really know her," Lucy said.

"I just sat near her on the plane from New York. Is she sick?"

"Not exactly sick," the deputy said. "She's been shot or stabbed. I think she's dead."

II

IT WAS ALMOST an hour before Mike Shayne and Lucy Hamilton were able to leave the airport. They wouldn't have made it anywhere nearly that fast if the redhead hadn't been well known to both the city and county police. It was at times like this that his longstanding close personal friendship with Miami Police Chief Will Gentry came in handy.

Because of this and because of his own local reputation they accepted the big man's assurance that Lucy Hamilton's role in the ugly business had been purely that of innocent bystander.

"She never saw that girl before," Shayne said. "Neither of us even knows her name. When the dead woman got into some sort of row Lucy just happened to be in the way."

"Coming from you, Mike, I'll accept that," the airport security chief said. "Of course we may want to ask Miss Hamilton some questions when we find out a little more what this is all about. Right now we haven't the foggiest idea why the girl was shot. She might even have been an innocent bystander herself. We'll be in touch with you later on."

"You know where to find us both,"

Shayne said. "You can be sure we'll cooperate anyway we can. Right now Miss Hamilton is tired. She needs a good meal and a rest. We'll be on our way."

When they were safely out of the building and walking across the concrete parking lot towards where Shayne had left his car he turned to Lucy again.

"I'm glad you kept still in there, Angel," he told her, "but now that here's just the two of us, do you have any idea at all what that was about?"

"I really don't," she said, looking up at him. "I never saw either of those women before in my life. The only really funny thing about it was we all had the same bags — shoulder bags, I mean. That seemed sort ofunny. I didn't say anything about it, hough."

"It could have been coincidence," Shayne said. "If it gets to be important I can tell the cops about it later on. I don't see why it should be hough."

"The only thing is," Lucy said, "that I got the idea for a minute hat fat woman wanted to trade bags with me. It was all happening so fast hat I couldn't really be sure. Maybe t just seemed so."

"Probably," Shayne said.

They'd reached the car and he unlocked the trunk and put her luggage inside. Then he opened the front o she could take her seat and walked around the hood to get behind he wheel. He took another good look at the bag then.



"It's a nice looking piece of leather, but I don't see why anyone would want to get into a fight to steal it. Of course a thief might take it if you set it down on a counter or some place and turned away — I can see that. But not a purse snatching in the middle of a hundred witnesses."

"I don't know," Lucy said. "Maybe it just seemed that way to me."

"You aren't carrying a lot of cash?" Shayne asked. "Or you didn't do anything to make somebody think you were?"

"Of course I wasn't — and didn't. You've certainly taught me to be careful."

"That's right," the voice said. "Everybody be careful and nobody gets hurt."

The man had come up between the cars unnoticed, and was standing only a couple of feet from the open window on Mike Shayne's side of the car. He was small and thin and dark. He wore an expensive Italian silk suit with the jacket specially cut to minimize the bulge where a holstered gun rode under his left shoulder. His hand was on or close to the butt of the gun.

His eyes were black and deadly and looked as if they ought to have nictating lids like a snake's.

Shayne's reflexes were always lightning fast, especially in an emergency. His left fist shot out and hit the gunman's chest, knocking the man off balance. At the same instant Shayne turned the ignition key of the car with his right hand and slammed his foot down on the accelerator.

The car moved out and Shayne's powerful arms twisted the wheel so the vehicle made a tight left turn and then picked up speed down the lane between two rows of parked cars.

They were well under way before the dark gunman got his weapon out. Then, instead of firing, he dropped back behind the cars, and was rapidly lost to sight.

"My Lord!" Lucy said. "What was that about?"

"I don't know," the detective said, "but when people go pulling guns on me, I think it's high time I found out."

He got the car out of the lot and headed back for downtown Miami at a good clip.

"I think we'd better take a good long look at that bag of yours," he said, "and find out what makes it so interesting to killer types all of a sudden."

"I think you're right," Lucy said. She pulled the bag around into her lap and opened it.

Mike Shayne saw her expression change.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"This isn't my bag, Michael," she said. "At least my wallet and compact aren't in it. I've never seen these things before."

"You said the woman was trying to trade bags with you," Shayne said. "I guess maybe she managed it after all when you were busy falling down. That would account for the lad with the gun back there. He must have wanted to get that one back again the hard way."

"What are we going to do, Michael?"

"Right now we're going to my place and have some steaks sent in and try to figure out what all this is about. If they have your bag, as I suppose they must, the identification in your wallet will finger you for them, so we'll stay clear of your apartment for a while."

"I hate to sound naive about this," Lucy said, "but why don't we just turn the car around and take this bag I got by mistake back to the airport? I mean why don't we just turn it in

to the police? Then I could go on home and get a hot bath and some sleep. You know how I don't particularly like New York City, and the last few days have worn me out."

"For one thing," Mike Shayne said, "whoever belongs to that bag has already killed one woman. Remember. If the little man back there had kept his mouth shut till he got his gun out, as he should have, we might already be numbers two and three on the "hit" parade. All that means is there's something really valuable involved in this, something important or worth lots of money."

"All the more reason to turn it over to the police before we get hurt," Lucy said.

"I don't think the people on the other side will ever believe we did that, Angel. They have your name already, and that'll tie me in. They'll just assume we kept whatever it is that bag holds that they want and turned in the rest of the bag. They'll still be after us just as much as ever, and we won't know why or who they are or how to defend ourselves."

"You're just interested in solving this puzzle yourself," Lucy said. "You don't fool me for a minute."

"I'm not trying to fool anybody," Mike Shayne said. "Through no fault of our own we've got killers after us right now. The only possible ace we might hold is in that bag. I want to find out what the ace is while it can still do some good in saving our necks."

"I know you, Michael," Lucy said.

"If there's an ace in this deck, what you want to do is play it."

III

TWO HOURS later Mike Shayne and Lucy Haminton were still in the dark as to what made the handsome leather shoulder bag important enough to warrant a murder.

They sat in the living room of the place Mike Shayne had maintained for years in a downtown apartment hotel looking out over the lower bend of the Miami River. Shayne had mixed them each a drink and had thick steaks, onion rings, garlic bread, french fries and deep dish Dutch apple pie sent in from their nearby favorite restaurant.

Once they had eaten he'd cleared the table and started a complete and intensive examination of the bag.

It was a duplicate of the one his secretary had purchased in New York all right. Even the label of the manufacturer and store was the same. As far as they could tell it was also brand new.

"That sales clerk swore mine was one-of-a-kind," Lucy said with a wan smile. "All the time she must have known this one had been sold within a day or two."

"If the fat woman had one too like you said," Shayne said, "it sounds like they'd been doing a wholesale business. Maybe you could have bought half a dozen and gotten the volume discount rate."

"Don't try to be funny, Michael."

"Believe me, Angel, I'm perfectly serious. When somebody starts waving guns around I always try to be serious. Let's get on with looking at this thing."

The contents of the bag offered no immediate clue to its importance. There was a wallet, also brand new as if purchased at the same time as the bag. Inside the wallet there were no identification papers; not even a driver's license. As a matter of fact the whole bag was bare of identification. That in itself was unusual.

Inside the wallet was forty-two dollars in small bills and about three dollars in small change.

"Hardly enough to kill for," Mike Shayne said.

He also found a pack of a standard brand of filter cigarette, almost completely smoked up, an inexpensive lighter and a pack of matches bearing the name of the airline, three crumpled facial tissues, an empty chewing gum wrapper, a small vial of inexpensive perfume, a lipstick, and a carefully folded square of newsprint cut from the previous Sunday's edition of the *Miami News*.

Mike Shayne pounced on the last item immediately, looked it over carefully and then tossed it onto the table with the other items.

"Just a piece taken from the apartments-for-rent section" he told Lucy. "Probably took it so she could find a place to rent when she got here."

Lucy picked up the paper and

smoothed it out. "That's funny," she said.

"What's funny?"

"If I'd been looking for a place to live, I'd have marked a couple of the places that sounded best. If I didn't see any that looked good, I wouldn't have bothered to bring this piece of the paper along. This isn't marked at all."

"Maybe she didn't have a pen with her," the redhead said. He had taken out his pocket knife and was carefully opening the seams of the expensive bag to see if anything had been sewed up inside.

Lucy Hamilton still held the paper.

"She had her lipstick," she said. "She could have marked an ad with that. Or if it was me, I could have dented the paper with a finger nail. It just seems awfully queer to me that she'd bring this along at all without marking it."

"Maybe she hadn't read it yet," Mike Shayne said. "Or maybe she didn't want to leave a clue to where she was going."

"She didn't know she was going to be killed," Lucy pointed out. "Maybe you ought to check out all these addresses just to be sure."

"If we do, it'll have to wait till morning," Shayne said. "Help me take this bag apart."

They found nothing at all, not even a trace that any of the seams of the bag had been tampered with at all.

"Maybe the bag wasn't the key to this whole thing," Lucy suggested. "After all we don't know for sure."

"I think I'm sure," Shayne said. "The bag was the only thing you have now that you didn't have before the girl was shot. It's the only reason I can think of why they'd send a gunsel after you. Unless the bag is the thing they want, the whole affair just doesn't make any sense."

"We certainly haven't found anything making a fuss over," Lucy said stubbornly.

"Just because we haven't found it doesn't mean it's not there. Sooner or later I'm going to find it, Angel. Don't worry about that."

"There's just one more thing," she said. "Remember there were three identical bags. At least I'm pretty sure there were. Mine. The dead girl's. And the third one, the one the fat woman was carrying. Now suppose only one of them was important. Maybe the fat woman got the one she was after in the scuffle. Did you think of that?"

"Sure I did," Shayne said. "In that case the dead girl would have had the bag with your identification. The cops at the airport would have returned it and there'd have been no point in anybody making more trouble for you. As a matter of fact the killers wouldn't have waited for you to come out of the security offices and then followed you. So you see, if any one of the bags is important, it has to be this one we're working on."

The telephone rang.

When Mike Shayne picked up the instrument he recognized the voice of



the clerk in the lobby of the building.

"I'm sorry to bother you, Mr. Shayne," the man said. "There's somebody down here that says he has to see you. I didn't want to bother you at this time of night, but he says it's very important."

"Who is he?"

"Nobody I ever saw before, and he won't give his name. He says he's a lawyer, and I gotta admit he looks the part. Even carries one of those black attache cases. You want I should call the cops?"

"No," Shayne said. "I can handle things. Did you tell him Miss Hamilton was with me?"

"I didn't. He didn't ask."

"Well then don't tell him. Make him wait a couple of minutes and then let him come on up. Get a good look at his face though, so you could identify him later on."

When Shayne hung up the phone he swept the pieces of the bag and its contents all together into a bundle and gave them to Lucy.

"Take these into the bedroom with you," he said. "Keep out of sight,

but leave the door open a crack so you can hear what goes on. And don't worry about me. I can handle any man they send."

"I know you can, but be careful anyway, Michael," she said as she gathered up the contents of the bag.

Mike Shayne was ready when a brisk knock on the apartment door announced the arrival of his visitor.

The man was small, thin and expensively dressed just as the gunman had been, but that was where the resemblance ended. This man was tough too, but it was an entirely different sort of toughness. This man was old and his body was frail rather than wiry. The top of his head was a bald spot, framed by wisps of white hair. The backs of his hands were blue veined and marked with brown liver spots.

It was only the eyes that revealed the man within. To a casual glance they were watery-grey and kindly. Mike Shayne looked more deeply and saw the steel will and determination back of the mild exterior.

The man returned his look frankly.

"I don't fool you, do I?" he said then. "I'd heard you were a man of intelligence, Mr. Shayne and for once it's a relief not to be disappointed."

"You're a dangerous man," Shayne said flatly.

"Of course I am," the man replied easily. "However I can assure you that you won't need the gun I see you're wearing under your jacket. I'm not that kind of dangerous. I give you my word."

"My judgment confirms your word," the detective said. "You don't kill people yourself."

"Of course not. I let other people do it for me. May I come in now?"

The man proffered an engraved business card which read: *Archibald Manchester Attorney at Law*, and gave a Miami office address.

Shayne stood back and let the lawyer come into the room. The man walked over and sat by the table. He put his attache case on the top where the mystery shoulder bag had rested only a few moments before.

He pointed to the case. "Some people have been known to carry guns in these things, Mr. Shayne. Guns or bombs. I carry a different kind of weapon. Allow me to show you."

He took a key out of his pocket and unlocked the attache case. When he put back the lid of the case Mike Shayne could see that it was almost filled with neat packages of United States currency in bank wrappers. The bills he could see were all fifties and hundreds.

"Take a good look," the attorney said.

Mike Shayne deliberately walked away from the table and sat in one of the big easy chairs over by the window.

"I don't suppose that is a gift," he said and chuckled.

The attorney may have been disappointed by Shayne's casual reaction. If he was, he didn't show it.

"Don't be too sure," he said.

"Under certain circumstances this could be a gift in return for cooperation. In return for full cooperation of course."

"Now just supposing," Mike Shayne said, "that I couldn't cooperate as you put it? Not that I wouldn't, because all that government lettuce you have there would convince any reasonable man. I mean suppose I couldn't help you out. Really and truly couldn't."

"We won't stretch probability that far," Manchester said. "My principals are sure that you can cooperate. If you fail to do so, then it will be an act of willful stubbornness on your part. In that case the people behind me won't feel very generous towards you. Can you imagine how they will feel in that case?"

"Try murder for size," Mike Shayne said drily. "Is that what you mean?"

"Of course not," the old man said. "I wouldn't even joke about such a terrible thing where you — or a hidden recorder — might overhear. I'm an attorney and so an officer of the court, and in a way an officer of the law. I don't even think about murders, let alone threaten them."

"On the other hand," Mike Shayne said, letting a broad grin slit his rugged countenance, "I can see easy enough that a whole case full of money could buy an awful lot of trouble for a man like me. So I guess you better come right out and put your cards on the table and tell me what you mean by cooperation."

"What my principals mean," Manchester said. "I'm only an agent in this whole affair. Whatever I say is for my clients and not myself. You understand me, Shayne?"

"Let it ride at that," the big detective said. "I'm still waiting to hear what your people want."

Manchester left the attache case open so that whenever Mike Shayne looked in his direction he couldn't help but see the stacks of crisp, green bills.

"My people know that something belonging to them is in your possession," he said. "As you very well know, they want it back. I can take it away with me in this attache case right now, and I can leave the money that's filling up the case now."

"That's cooperation?"

"Exactly so, Mr. Shayne. That's cooperation."

The attorney spoke in a low tone, but so does a deadly snake when it hisses a warning. There was a quality of poison in his voice, and Mike Shayne didn't miss it.

Lucy Hamilton, sitting in the next room, caught the menace too and shuddered.

"On the other hand suppose I did just what you said and gave you something or other? Then what? Wouldn't it be evidence in the murder of a young woman this afternoon out at the airport? How could you reconcile that with being an officer of the court, Mr. Manchester?"

The man caught the mockery in Shayne's tone, and he didn't like it.

His face went just a shade whiter, his eyes hooded behind old, papery lids. He kept his voice unchanged though.

"If you knew me, Shayne, you wouldn't play silly games with me. I warn you I will pass over insolence only once. Now — will you give me what I want? Quickly! Yes or no."

"I told you once," Mike Shayne said. "I can't. I don't have it. Whatever you think I got this afternoon, I didn't get it. Miss Hamilton lost a bag she had just bought. She wants her wallet and personal things back. You tell your mystery men that. Instead of her own she ended up with an empty bag just like the one she lost. Empty. Nothing in it. Nothing at all. If anybody stole something it was one of your own people — the dead girl or the fat woman or that stupid gunny of yours. I don't know who it was and I don't care. That's your business. Yours and your friends'. All I'm telling you is I haven't got whatever it is you want."

"I don't believe you," Manchester said.

"You're calling me a liar," Mike Shayne told him. "I don't let my friends call me that, let alone a stranger coming in here in the middle of the night. I don't know what it is you're looking for and I don't have it. I'm giving you my word on that.

The little lawyer fought a terrific battle for self-control and just barely won.

"You made a suggestion," he said. "It will be checked out. If one of the

others does have what we want, you won't see us again."

Manchester got up and closed the attache case with a snap. He was mad enough when he reached for it so that he got careless.

"You're wearing a sleeve derringer," Shayne said. "I could see it when you stretched your arm out. Get it and your money out of here, and don't come back. If you ever wear a gun near me again, I'll take it away from you and make you swallow it, shells and all."

"You're a fool," the little old man spat at him. "You threaten me. You're a lot more than your reputation makes you out."

"I said to get out of here."

The lawyer drew himself up to his not very considerable full height.

"I understand you now," he said. "Once this money goes out the door, it isn't coming back in again. If you see me again, Mr. Shayne, I will be bringing in something a great deal more conclusive than money. The only thing I will offer you then as a price of your cooperation is life. Your own life."

"If I was your kind," Shayne said, "I'd take your gun and your money right now and throw the rest of you out the window. Get out of here."

When Archibald Manchester was gone, Lucy Hamilton came back to the living room. "That horrible man, Michael. Do you think he meant what he said?"

"He meant it," Mike Shayne told her.

IV

THE LAWYER HADN'T been gone five minutes when Mike Shayne's phone rang again. This time it was Miami Police Chief Will Gentry.

"I don't like to bother you at this time of night, Mike," the Chief said, "but do you know where Lucy is right now?"

"Sure I do," Shayne said. "She's right here in the room with me having a late nightcap. You probably heard I met her at the plane. She's been with me ever since."

"Thank God for that!" The Chief's gruff voice was hearty. "For a bit there I was worried."

"About what? She had nothing to do with that poor girl who got shot."

"Somebody seems to think she had," Gentry said.

"Could you spell that out, Will?"

"Give me time. We had a call from one of Lucy's neighbors half an hour ago. Said there seemed to be trouble in the apartment. Luckily the desk sergeant recognized the address and sent a car over as fast as they could wheel. There was trouble okay. That's the least you could say of it."

"I don't understand. Lucy's been with me all evening since we left the airport."

"Give me a chance, Mike. At first the boys thought it was just a B. and E. Then they saw the place had been absolutely torn apart. Lucy better hope her stuff is insured. Whoever they were, they were thorough. Took



the stuffing out of easy chairs and the backs off pictures, that sort of thing. The furnishings and a lot of her clothes were a total loss."

"Hold on — Shayne turned from the phone and told his secretary briefly what had happened. Then to the Chief again: "Any more?"

"Plenty more, boy. That's what had me all riled up. There's blood all over the bedroom. A regular pool of it on the rug and floor and irregular splashes on furnishings and walls. Looks like somebody was either clawed to shreds by a tiger or knifed eight ways to the ace."

"Any clues?"

"I don't know yet. As soon as I got the call on the blood I phoned you. I was scared as hell it was Lucy's blood. I'm still in my office, but I'm heading over to Lucy's place right now."

"We'll meet you there," Mike Shayne said.

He hung up the phone and hurried Lucy Hamilton down to the lobby. "They're in real earnest," he said in the elevator.

"Who could it have been?" Lucy asked. "I mean whose blood was on the floor?"

"I don't know," Mike Shayne said soberly. "Probably one of their own people trying to doublecross the rest of them. If they caught him searching your place, they'd guess what he was up to and finish him off right there and then. One thing for sure — whatever this is about it's a lot bigger than I thought at first."

"I know," Lucy said. "Michael, don't you think we ought to tell Will Gentry what we know and turn the pieces of the bag over to him?"

"The bag!" Shayne said. "I almost forgot that damn bag."

He stopped the elevator and reversed it; went back into his own apartment; swept all the pieces of the bag into a large manila envelope, and in-turn put that in an old leather briefcase which he carried when they rode down again.

His car was parked in the regular lot to the right of the lobby. They went out the front door and turned in that direction.

"Are you going to turn that over to Will?" Lucy asked, indicating the briefcase.

"I don't know," Shayne said. "I've got to think about that, but I don't want to just leave it lying around

where somebody could get his hands on it."

Suddenly a car came into the street with a sharp, rubber-squealing turn a block away and came at them fast.

Mike Shayne moved by instinct with the cat-like speed and grace he could muster in emergency. His left arm circled Lucy's waist and pulled her behind a car parked at the curb at the same time his right pulled the big forty-five automatic from its belt holster.

As the car passed them something was thrown out of the window to land on the top of the car behind which they crouched and rattle down the sidewalk. Then the fast-moving vehicle whipped on by.

A voice, loud and harsh in the night silence, called back. "Next time, shamus. Next time around."

Then the car was gone around the next corner as swiftly as it had come.

Mike Shayne bent over and scooped up two small objects from the sidewalk. He held them out to Lucy. They were twelve gauge shotgun shells.

"Lawyer Archie Manchester's notion of a warning and a joke," he said drily. "Next time they'll deliver the lead by shooting it into me instead of throwing it at me, I guess. That is they will unless I give them what they want."

"If you take my advice," Lucy said. "You'll give what they want to Will Gentry and get us out of this."

"I might do just that, Angel, except I'm sure it wouldn't get us out of

a thing. Old Manchester would be absolutely sure I was holding out whatever he's after. We'd just be targets with our only chance of solving this thing locked up in a police property room."

"Maybe the police lab could find whatever we're all looking for."

"If they can find it, Angel, I can."

"All right," she said, "but remember I think you're wrong this time. You're taking too long a chance."

They drove straight up to Lucy's apartment building near the Bay on the northeast side. There were two police prowls in the street outside the building as well as the unmarked, bulletproof limousine Chief Gentry used as an official car.

The driver, and the uniformed man in the lobby of the building both recognized Lucy Hamilton and Mike Shayne and waved them on through.

Lucy's apartment was full of plain-clothes detectives and police lab technicians busy taking blood samples, dusting for fingerprints and searching the place for evidence. Flash bulbs popped as pictures of the devastated rooms were taken.

Lucy just said, "Oh," in a small, hurt voice and sat down on what was left of her living room couch.

Mike Shayne went on into the bedroom. The two men who greeted him as he came through the door were Chief Gentry and Shayne's old friend, reporter Tim Rourke of the Miami News.

"About time you got here," the gangling reporter greeted his friend.

"My God, Mike, what have you and Lucy been up to? Did somebody think they were killing her or what? I mean what goes on here? I was in Will's office when the first flash came in, and it scared the hell out of both of us."

"I don't know anymore than you two," Shayne said. "I just got here. Remember?"

"Oh, come off it," Gentry said. "I had a routine report on the goings on at the airport today. That has to be tied in. Suppose you tell me the part that's not on the official teletype."

Shayne shoved his battered brown Stetson hat to the back of his head. One big hand went up so the thumb and forefinger could tug at his ear lobe.

"I don't know any more than you do," he assured them.

Will Gentry swung to face him. One hand gestured at a detective busy rolling up the blood-soaked bedroom rug.

"So help me, Mike," he growled. "That ain't ketchup spilled on that rug. This time I don't want the usual nonsense out of you. I want the truth. You'd better believe it. I won't stand still while you risk the life of a girl like Lucy Hamilton just to prove how smart you are."

"He's got something there," Tim Rourke added. "Whoever made this mess must be a real tough cookie. It's not his fault they aren't rolling Lucy up along with that rug right now."

"I'm not holding out on you," Mike Shayne protested. "Lucy got knocked down on the airport ramp this afternoon when two women she didn't know from Adam's off ox got into some sort of a fight with each other. She didn't know either of the women, and it wasn't her fight. Hell, we told all that to the airport security people and the sheriff's boys."

"I know," Gentry said. "I know all that. What I want now is the part you didn't tell them at the airport. I mean the part that made a slaughterhouse out of Lucy's nice clean apartment. That is, if it isn't too much trouble."

"Oh, hell," Shayne said, "you know it isn't that. I just honestly don't know what's going on. Obviously somebody thinks Lucy knows more about that airport business than she really does. Otherwise he wouldn't have come here at all. He must think she has something that she doesn't have. Who he is or what he's after, though, I haven't got the least idea."

"You mean that?"

"Of course I mean it. That bunch in Security just asked questions. They didn't give me any answers. Maybe you can fill in some of the things they left out. For instance just what was it those dames were fighting about?"

"You honestly don't know?" Gentry asked.

"I honestly don't. I swear I don't." Mike Shayne was telling the truth, and his voice held a satisfactory ring of conviction. "I don't know who

they were or what any of it was about. Neither does Lucy. You can ask her yourself if you want."

"Well, maybe you mean it," Gentry said. "To tell the truth we don't know a hell of a lot more than you do. On the dead girl at the airport we finally got an identity. Her prints were in the F.B.I. files. It wasn't much help, though."

"Small time I suppose," Shayne said.

"That's the trouble," Gentry agreed. "Very small time. All they printed her for was suspicion of bumbo and one time the badger game, but the mark wouldn't sign a complaint for fear of publicity. Her name is — or maybe I better say was — Gilda Gould. Just a tramp from some place out in Ohio. I'd have said she'd be strictly out of her depth in any caper serious enough to involve a killing."

"Yeah," Tim Rourke put in, "but theré she was dead on the floor, shot with a twenty-two in the brain at close range. There has to be some reason — some way she got there, I mean."

"That's it," Mike Shayne said. "Where does a small timer like that rate getting killed? Haven't you people found any sort of connection for her that might make sense?"

"Everybody's been trying," Gentry said. "As a matter of fact even the federals are in on this one. The F.B.I. and other people I'm not supposed to mention, even if I was sure who they were; which I'm not. All

of a sudden the whole thing's hotter than a galvanized tin roof in July. There's people flying in from all over the country."

"That might account for their being in such a hurry to search this place," Mike Shayne said, "and not caring about blood on the rug. If it's that hot, they wouldn't think twice about a killing or two. Damn it, Will, you're the Chief around here. Don't you have any notion what's going on?"

"Not a lot," Gentry admitted. "This is big enough so even a major city police force doesn't seem to count. That's a big reason I'm warning you not to try any of your usual tricks this time, you big mick. You monkey around with this case and it'll be like grabbing a live power cable with your bare hand."

"Maybe I'm wearing rubber-soled shoes," Shayne said. "Besides I don't even know what it's about yet. Come on, Will, give me a break."

"I would if I could. There's only one thing I can think of that might be a lead, and that's more a hunch than anything else."

"With your experience, Will," Tim Rourke said, "I'd trust one of those educated hunches of yours above any three other men's inside information. Give."

"Well then, let's add up a few things. The dead girl's name is Gilda Gould. She is or was — we don't know for sure — the common law wife of a Brooklyn hood named Manny Gould. Now Manny's no big



shakes either, that is if he's still alive. I doubt he is. He's been out of the news for three years.

"But — and this could be a big but — he's got a brother named Saul. We had him here in the tank two years back on an armed robbery rap but his mouthpiece sprung him on a technicality. He wasn't using the name of Gould then. Called himself Sylvan Green, but his real name was Saul Gould."

The Chief paused for breath.

"This is fascinating," said Rourke sarcastically, "but where does it go from here?"

"Shut up," Shayne said. "Give Will a chance."

"That's right," Gentry said. "I'm just getting to the point which is that Sylvan Green has a lot bigger name than his brother. A real business man this one. The Import and Export business we might say — or on the other hand we might just say smuggling."

"Smuggling what?" Shayne asked.

"I'm not sure. Remember I'm trying to think back to a record I only saw once and a couple of years ago. Diamonds, I think, and furs. It seems to me drugs got a mention too."

Tim Rourke said, "That could be big. Big enough to bring in the Federais."

"Maybe," the Chief said, "but it's still all pretty far-fetched. A girl who shacked up with the brother of a hood who may have handled the snow."

"Anything else to tie him to dope?" Mike Shayne asked.

"Well yes. There was one thing. The lawyer who sprang Saul. He was from New York and he'd represented narcotics groups before. I remember because he had sort of a funny name. Archy or something."

"Archibald Manchester?" Shayne asked.

"That's it. How'd you know?"

V

LUCY HAMILTON'S apartment was so thoroughly torn up that it was impossible for her to spend the rest of the night there, so Mike Shayne arranged for her to take a room at a downtown hotel. He also asked Will Gentry to put a police guard outside the room, and the Chief agreed readily enough.

"I guess we have plenty of evidence her life may be in danger," he said.

Shayne told the Chief he was going

on down to the News with Tim Rourke while the reporter wrote up his story on the case.

Gentry agreed, "Just one thing. How come you knew the name of that lawyer?"

"Just a hunch," the redhead said. "A goofy name like that is one a guy will remember if he ever hears it. Just like you remembered it yourself. I must have run across it someplace, and it just popped into my mind."

"I wish I knew when you were lying," Gentry said. "You just remember now. No foolishness on this case or the next thing to pop into your head might be a bullet."

"You just watch out that nobody puts a bullet in my girl," Shayne told him. "That's all I ask. After that I'll take care of myself."

Mike Shayne and Tim Rourke went down to the News Building together and took the elevator up to the writer's private cubicle looking out over the waters of Biscayne Bay. By this time it was late at night, but Miami and Miami Beach never really slept in the winter season. Strings of moving cars on the Causeways strung their lights like moving jewels over the Bay. Off to the right of where they sat there were more lights and the sound of music from a couple of the big, luxury yachts tied up at the new City Marina.

"Now that there's nobody here but us chickens," Rourke said, "now that everything's nice and cozy, why don't you tell old Uncle Tim whatever it is you've been holding out."

"You've got a nasty mind," Mike Shayne said. "You heard what I told Will."

"If my mind's nasty," Rourke said, "it's from long years of close association with the world's trickiest private detective. I know you want my help with something, or you wouldn't have come on down here. So come on and spill it before I say I won't play."

"All I want is the use of your phone."

"I don't really believe that, but go on. What do you want it for?"

"I just happened to remember that the lawyer Will mentioned — the one with the funny name — is back in town. Just out of curiosity I want to know where he's staying."

"Just out of curiosity in a pig's ear," Rourke said. "What has old Archibald been doing to you?"

"That's what I want to find out," Shayne said, "but first I've got to locate Archy." He reached for the phone.

"Let it be," Rourke said. "I'm a big wheel around this place now. There are nice clean, fresh-faced journalism school grads to do the detail work for me."

He picked up his desk phone and punched one of the buttons. "Tom? Rourke here. There's a bigtime northern legal beagle name of Archibald Manchester come to town in the last few days. I need to know where he's roosting. Get a couple of your lads on the job and tell them it's a rush, high priority that I must know inside of ten minutes."

When Rourke put the phone down he got up and walked over to the expensive steel filing cabinet in one corner of his office. The second drawer down yielded a bottle of excellent French brandy and a couple of unwashed glass tumblers. They each poured a stiff three fingers and tossed it down.

"Now give me the rest of the inside poop," Rourke said.

He leaned back and put his feet upon the desk. Outside the window a belated tugboat was hooting for one of the Causeway drawbridges to be raised.

"I don't know why nobody believes me," Mike Shayne said and reached for the bottle again. "The only rest of it is my girl's been knocked down and grilled by the police. I've been followed by gunsels, threatened by a slimy old man, and had my word doubted by my two best friends.

"On top of that Lucy's furniture has been ruined and she'll have to move anyway because she won't be able to stand thinking of blood soaked into the floor. Do you know how expensive moving is this time of year? Let alone new furniture?"

"Rent her a furnished place," Rourke said. "I suppose the slimy old man is Archy Manchester? Now give me the rest of it."

"I don't have it," Shayne said. "I don't know why all this has happened. That's true, but by God I mean to find out. I mean to find out if I have to take a dirty old lawyer

by the head and heels and twist him till I wring the blood out like water from a washrag."

The phone on the desk rang.

Tim Rourke picked it up.

"Eleven minutes," he said. "Tom your boys are slow. Dock them their whiskeybreak for inefficiency." Then he listened.

When he hung up the phone he said: "Mike, your man has a suite at the Comanche Boulevard Motel, up near Miami Shores. No secret about it. Registered under his own name."

"The Comanche used to be the old 99 Club," Mike Shayne said reflectively. "From what I hear there's still a gambling layout on the premises in the old original building. Some pretty rough characters hang out there."

"I know," Rourke agreed. "A good spot for a buzzard to roost. What's this Manchester got to do with murder? I suppose he is mixed up in it, or you wouldn't be looking for him."

"I don't know what he's got to do with it," Shayne said. "I just know he's in it. I told Will the truth just now. Lucy had nothing to do with that business tonight. She was just caught in the middle. However she somehow had purses switched on her. She ended up with somebody else's bag. Apparently that was a mistake."

"That what they searched her pad for?"

"It has to be. I guess one of them got killed in the process. It's also what Manchester tried to buy from

me earlier. Apparently Lucy bought a duplicate to the bag that dead girl carried. It must have been the mark by which the fat woman would know the carrier of something important. Except for Lucy having an identical bag, the others could have switched easily enough."

"You mean everybody concerned thought they had exclusive items?" Tim Rourke asked. "Just goes to show you can't trust even the most exclusive shops any more. Well, why didn't you sell it to Manchester, or give it to Will. But I suppose that's too simple for your master mind to consider."

"It's not exactly that way. He brought a whole attache case full of hundred dollar bills. I want to know what's that valuable."

"You mean you want to get your hands in it," Rourke said.

"Maybe. I don't know. If I sold to Manchester he'd figure I knew what it was he'd bought and he wouldn't take a chance. Lucy and I would be rubbed out anyway. If I give it to Will, he'll figure the same way. Besides I don't know what it is. I need to find out before I make any decision."

"Something in the purse?" Rourke asked.

Mike Shayne picked the briefcase he'd been carrying off the floor beside his chair and dumped the contents on Rourke's desk. "Look for yourself."

"Seems to me you've already done that pretty thoroughly." Rourke

poked among the leather and cloth pieces with the end of a pencil. Then he noticed the piece of newsprint and picked it up.

"This is from our paper," he said. "What's it doing here?"

"That's a good question," Shayne said. "It seems to be just a list of addresses. Why don't you keep the paper here and check them out? Besides I've got a strong hunch that paper holds the clue to this whole murderous business. There's nothing else of value in that whole mess, so it could be a code message of some sort. Maybe outright treason involved. Maybe industrial espionage. Anyway you see if you can find anything."

"If it is espionage," Tim Rourke said, "then that could make it worth killing for — particularly if our friends back of the bamboo curtain were involved."

"Sure," Shayne said. "It's the sort of fancy gimmick they would think up. So check it for me."

"You watch your step," Rourke said. "In a thing of this sort they'd kill you as quick as eating rice. What are you going to be doing?"

The big man finished his brandy and stood up. "I'm going to stick my head in the lion's mouth and see if I can't get him to choke to death. I'm going to do the last thing Manchester expects right now — go see him."

It was a decision that was utterly characteristic of Mike Shayne. The big private detective had always



chosen to meet danger face to face. Again and again his determination and sheer audacity had paid off against even the longest odds.

Of course there was a chance of failure each time he determined upon the bold and direct course. So far he had won out on each occasion. On this night he was willing to try again.

"What about this?" Tim Rourke indicated the bag.

"I'm going to take it along," Shayne said. "At least most of it."

He substituted bills of his own for those that had been in the dead girl's wallet, and left the match folder with Tim Rourke. On second thought he also substituted a partly smoked pack of the reporter's cigarettes.

"You check this stuff over," Shayne said. "See if you can find any invisible ink or coding. No sense giving old Archy too much of an easy ride."

Shayne drove straight north on

Biscayne Boulevard. He knew he was about to take a very long chance, but he also knew he was dealing with men who had already showed a complete willingness to kill. If he postponed a showdown, it would only mean giving them another chance to strike.

Also he was confident of his own ability to handle Archy Manchester. He knew he'd gotten under the old lawyer's skin a couple of times during their brief interview, and he was pretty sure he could do it again. A man he could irritate or anger was also a man he could hold at a disadvantage.

The Comanche Motel occupied a couple of acres of prime land facing on the Boulevard and running east to the edge of the Bay. The old gambling club building was on the rear of the property, but the new motel area in front was expensively and lavishly decorated.

Shayne left his car in the public parking spaces, and walked into the lobby. "I'm here to see Archy Manchester," he told the man behind the desk.

The clerk looked shocked.

"Mr. Manchester is asleep at this time of night," he said rather primly.

"You tell him Mike Shayne wants to do business and watch how fast he wakes up," the big detective said.

"I'm not sure," the clerk temporized. "He left word not to be disturbed."

Shayne put both hands on the edge of the desk and leaned forward. The

clerk was on his feet, but the big man was still looking down at him.

"You ring Manchester now," the redhead said, "or I'm going upstairs to beat Archy's door down. And he won't like you for that."

The clerk didn't hesitate after that. He picked the house phone out of its cradle and dialed. He spoke briefly.

"He says go on up," he said. "It's room two-oh-eight. The door will be unlocked. Just walk on in."

Mike Shayne didn't bother to tell the man he knew he was lying, but took the wide, curving stairway up to the second floor. The carpeted corridor was empty.

Shayne moved as quietly as a big hunting cat to the door of 206. A touch on the knob told him it was locked from the inside, but within thirty seconds a key from the ring the big man always carried had remedied that.

He got the door open silently and slid into the room. The lights were all off but the room was adequately illuminated by reflection from the motel signs outside. He could see the slight figure of Archibald Manchester standing with his ear pressed against the door of the adjoining room.

"Didn't they tell you those doors are sound proof?" Shayne said in low tones. He laughed when the old man almost jumped out of his shoes.

"Just step back nice and quiet and let your boys in 208 go on waiting for me," Shayne said. "Next time

don't underestimate the local talent. Go on now. Sit down in that chair by the window and keep both your hands out where I can see them. I can out-draw you anyhow, but this time I'd rather talk than fight."

When the lawyer compiled Mike Shayne sat down opposite him.

"A while ago you made an offer to buy something from me," Shayne said. "I wasn't ready to sell then. Now it might be."

"Might be?" Manchester asked. "What is that supposed to mean?" He was recovering his composure as such men usually do when the talk turns to dickering.

"It means just what you think it does," Mike Shayne said. "If the price is right, if we can make a deal that suits both of us, then I'm ready to do business. I can't make it any plainer, can I?"

"You might," the lawyer said. "As a matter of fact you're going to have to. I want to know what changed your mind about dealing. You made it perfectly clear that you wouldn't sell. Perfectly clear. Now you say different."

"I got greedy," Mike Shayne said.

The old man grinned a wicked grin at him. "That won't do. It won't do at all, Shayne. You better tell me the truth and tell it in a hurry. Pretty soon my boys next door will start wondering why you haven't walked under the axe and start investigating. When they look in here your bargaining power will be all gone."

"I doubt that," the redhead said,

"but I guess you're entitled to know. I'll level with you, Manchester, because I really do want to make a deal."

"All right then. Tell me, and it had better be convincing, Shayne. Your time is running out."

"Here it is then. I figured what you wanted was the shoulder bag Lucy Hamilton ended up holding. It had to be. I knew as soon as we realized the stuff wasn't hers, that there'd been some sort of a switch made during that donnybrook on the airport rampway. I was right, wasn't I?"

"Supposing you were?"

"Oh, don't try to be cagy. You're not in a courtroom now. I know that was it. I thought I could find out why you wanted it and beat you to whatever pot of gold was sitting at the end of your rainbow. Now you see I am being on the level with you."

"Only because you have to be," Manchester said with some contempt. "I could have told you you'd never figure out what was going. You wouldn't have believed me. Now you have to pay for that refusal."

"Spell it out," Shayne said.

"Here it is. There was twenty thousand dollars in the attache case I took to your apartment. Twenty thousand nice clean American dollars. I was willing to pay it all for the shoulder bag. You didn't see it that way. So now the price is ten thousand."

"What the hell . . ." Shayne said.

"Ten thousand. Take it or leave it."

An alarm bell was ringing somewhere in the back of Mike Shayne's brain. There was something wrong here. The old man oughtn't to be baiting him that way. He should be more eager to accept Shayne's terms, but he wasn't.

"Ten thousand is better than nothing," Shayne said.

It was Manchester's turn to be surprised. "Doesn't it hurt to have the price cut?"

"I've only got your word that it ever was twenty thousand," Shayne said. "Ten grand in the hand, if you get me. Let's see it."

"First let's see what you have to sell."

Shayne put the briefcase he'd been carrying on his knees and opened it. He turned it up and dumped the pieces of the shoulder bag and its slightly altered contents onto the floor of the motel room.

There was enough reflected light coming in the windows for the old lawyer to see that he was getting what he wanted. He poked the pile with one finger, then straightened and smiled that utterly mirthless smile.

"It seems to be all there."

"It is all there. What do you want me to do, sew it together again for you?"

"That won't be necessary."

"Then let's see the money. The cash. Ten thousand dollars. Now."

Old Manchester leaned down and pulled his attache case from under the bed and passed it across the room to the big man watching him.

"I should make you wait till I check this," the lawyer said, indicating the pile on the floor. "Somehow though I think you are a reliable man. Go ahead and count yourself out ten thousand dollars from the case and then get out of here. And don't make me remind you to hurry. My boys will be waking up to the way you sidestepped them any minute now. When they do, they'll look in here and I'll be tempted to forget about paying you anything at all."

Mike Shayne was busy watching the old man's face. His big fingers fumbled with the lock of the attache case and then snapped the lid open.

An automatic alarm inside the attache case exploded into a crescendo of sound that could be heard at least a block away.

VI

MIKE SHAYNE snapped the case shut again instinctively, but once the alarm had started it didn't stop. The hideous siren continued to sound.

He heard yells from the adjoining room 208 and the crash of bodies against the connecting door. The "boys" would break their way through at any moment.

He saw the old lawyer sitting there grinning at him like a wrinkled old goblin out of a childhood nightmare. The old man's hand flashed into his breast pocket and came out with what looked like a fat-bodied fountain pen.

Shayne, on his feet by then, recognized the thing for what it was. He closed his eyes and lashed out blindly. His fist hit Manchester, but the old man was on his feet and rolling away from the blow.

As he fell backwards the tear gas pen in his hand fired its charge, but the lawyer was already falling and the gas went into the air above Mike Shayne's head.

The big man gripped the attache case, still sounding its crazy alarm, and ran the three steps to the window. As he got his left leg over the sill, the door to room 208 broke open and sagged into the room. A man who had put his shoulder to the door fell inwards. Another, behind him, snapped off a shot at Shayne in the window.

The lead slug tore the fabric of Mike Shayne's jacket at the right shoulder and ripped its way out without even breaking the skin. Another shot wouldn't miss. Shayne let himself fall backwards out of the window.

His body crunched the aluminum storm awning over the ground floor window. He slid off and lit in a bed of croton and ornamental plantings that rimmed the building.

Somehow he still held the attache case in his left hand. The infernal alarm continued to hoot. There were cars stopping on the boulevard and people running out of the motels adjoining and across the roadway.

A man with a gun appeared in the window of room 206, but he'd apparently gotten a breath of the tear



gas. His face was contorted, his eyes streaming water. He couldn't see to fire.

The big detective pulled his own gun and shot the hood through the left shoulder. The impact of the heavy caliber slug packed punch enough to knock the man back into the room.

Then the window of room 208 opened. They could fire from inside there without having to worry about tear gas. They could stand back out of Shayne's sight and see him clearly on the ground.

The redhead did the only thing possible under the circumstances. He half crawled, half scrambled his way underneath one of the cars parked alongside the motel. The engine would shield him from fire out of the windows.

It was a poor shelter and Mike

Shayne knew it. He was a big man, and the car was a late model and slung close to the ground. Shayne barely got under and had no freedom of movement at all. As soon as the hoods thought to run downstairs and out the doors, he'd be pinned down like a bug on a collector's board. All they'd have to do was collect him.

Mike Shayne hastily scrambled out from under the car on the side next to the street.

Cars had stopped and the sidewalk was crowded with people. They saw the big man crawl out from under the car. He was dirty and bleeding from cuts and scratches. His clothes were torn. He had the howling attache case in one hand and his big, smoking gun in the other.

The crowd got ready to run for its individual lives.

Shayne got the attache case open again. He spotted the alarm mechanism and ripped it out with one powerful hand. He swung his arm and tossed the alarm as far as he could into the parking lot. In mid-air the awful whoop-whooping stopped.

The crowd yelled when they saw him open the case. Then they saw the stacks of green currency inside. For a moment there was incredulous silence and then a collective yell of astonishment.

"He robbed the place!" somebody shouted.

In the background a camera flashbulb popped.

At the same instant Mike Shayne saw the side door of the motel open

and a knot of tough looking men run out. Alone, in the open, he was a perfect mark. They could shoot him down and claim they were stopping a robbery.

He needed the cover of a crowd around him, but the watchers would panic and run if he took a step towards them.

Mike Shayne reached into the attache case and grabbed out a stack of one hundred dollar bills. He ripped the binder loose and threw the bills onto the concrete in front of him. They began to blow and eddy about in the light wind that blew in from the sea.

"Help yourselves, folks," Shayne yelled.

The people milled about. Some came forward and others pushed back. Most of them didn't realize it was money blowing around there in front of them on the sidewalks of Biscayne Boulevard.

Shayne ripped open another stack of hundreds.

"Real money, folks," he yelled at the top of his voice. "Come and get 'em. Hundred dollar bills free for anybody. Come and help yourselves."

He ripped open another stack. The sidewalk was awash with bits of green paper. Some of the people began to pick up bills and stuff them into their pockets. Then the whole crowd began to yell and surge forward.

Mike Shayne shoved his way through. Somehow he got around to his own car parked in front of the

motel. He yanked the door open and slid in behind the wheel.

"I've been waiting for you, Mr. Shayne," said a voice behind him. "I was sure those stupid men couldn't hold you."

It was a woman's voice.

At the same moment he felt the cold iron ring of a gun muzzle touch the back of his neck.

VII

WITH THE GUN at his back Mike Shayne had to get out of the car. There wasn't anything else he could do.

By that time the hard looking men he'd seen run out of the Comanche Motel had pushed their way through the crowd and made a tight little ring around him. He got a look at the woman then. He wasn't sure but he thought it was the same heavy-set woman who had run into Lucy Hamilton on the airport rampway earlier that day. Then she stepped back out of his line of sight.

The people in front of the motel were still scrambling for what was left of the money Shayne had scattered with such a reckless hand. A couple of fights had already started over disputed bills. The combatants fought as if their lives depended on the outcome.

As far as Shayne could tell no one had paid the slightest attention to what had happened to him. The crowd apparently couldn't care less.

He resigned himself and went

along with his captors without any more fuss. He was tired, battered, outnumbered and outgunned. A fight right then would probably just have gotten him killed as a bandit resisting arrest. There'd be another chance, and he'd save his strength to take advantage of it when it came.

They marched him down the whole length of the Comanche Motel on the side away from the crowd and took him into the old gambling house on the seaward end of the lot. Even at this late hour the gambling rooms were still crowded with tourists looking for the action they'd come hundreds of miles to find.

The people with Mike Shayne took him in a side door and down a long passage to a sort of wing in the back of the building that had once been offices and was now used for storage rooms.

The first thing the men did there was to take his gun. Next they pulled off his belt and used it to tie his arms behind him at the elbows. It wasn't a very tight knot as the belt was new and the leather stiff. Shayne knew he could twist loose without too much trouble.

They pushed the big man down into a straight chair facing an ancient and battered desk.

Then the woman who had captured Shayne came in and sat down behind the desk. The light was behind her and shining in Shayne's face, but in spite of this he got his first good look at her.

She was stockily built, but neither

as fat or as clumsy as he had expected. Her waist was slender by comparison, and her breasts round and firm. There was no sag under the firm chin, and her face, while certainly not beautiful, was alert and attractive. Her eyes were brown, sparkling and very intelligent. She might have been fifty or a couple of years either way.

Mike Shayne knew at once that this woman was probably the leader and brains of the mob.

He looked at her with his best, impassive poker face, but with a feeling that he wasn't fooling the woman a bit. She'd be a lot harder to handle than the lawyer, Archibald Manchester, had been. He wondered if he could in fact handle her at all. He knew he had to. His life would depend on it.

She was looking him over with equal interest. "Archy thought you were a greedy fool," she said finally. "I told him you weren't, but he insisted on following his own ideas. They weren't good enough."

She paused then and waited for Shayne to speak. He continued to watch her without expression and without saying anything. Each of them wanted the other to speak in the hope of picking up useful information. It was a minor contest of wills, and this time she decided to let him win.

"Archy is looking over the material you brought to sell him," she said finally. "If he finds what he's looking for, it will go much easier

with you. I'm sure you must have realized that already."

Shayne let the silence drag out for a minute again, but this time he knew it was his turn to speak. He decided to stick to the role of the venal private eye which he had been playing up to this point.

"He'll find it. That is, he will if it's there at all. I gave him everything I had that might have it."

"Don't you know if it's there?" she asked. "I had assumed anyone as clever as you are would know."

"I told the old man the truth," Mike Shayne said. "I looked, but I didn't find anything I could be sure of. You have to take into account that I didn't even know what it was I was looking for. That was a handicap."

"I'm not sure I believe you," she said.

"How would I know? Miss Hamilton's getting that bag was an accident. You know that if anyone does. I only had an hour to look it over. Then Archy came to call. After that I heard about the killings at Lucy's. It's odd now, but I thought for a while it was you that got killed. I figured you were trying to get to the right bag before your friends did and they caught you at it."

"Why would I do that?" she smiled, but there wasn't any mirth in it.

"You might have been trying to make up for your mistake in mixing up the bags," he said. Then, more bold than before: "If I'd really seen

you, I would have figured you mixed the bags on purpose so you could snag the right one back from Lucy Hamilton and have it all to yourself."

"You have a devious mind, Mike Shayne," she said. "Intelligent, but devious. In a way it's too bad you're not on our side. No, the one who got killed was the man who should have stopped you at the airport and failed. He was trying to make up for letting you get away, he said. We didn't believe him so we killed him. I'm sorry about Miss Hamilton's furniture, but —"

"Wait a minute," Shayne said. "I am on your side. At least I have been since I decide to sell to you."

Her face didn't change expression at all. He wasn't making his point, so he stopped talking.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I really would have liked to have you with us. You and I would make a good team."

"What makes you so sure we still can't? I cut myself off from any other side when I decided to sell?"

"Oh, come now," she said. "You must have known what you were getting into. Under the circumstances, considering what's at stake, you had to realize you couldn't just walk in here and get paid off and be allowed to walk away again. We might just possibly have chanced that with a more stupid man than you are, but never with a Mike Shayne."

"I suppose that's a compliment," Shayne said, "although with my life in the balance I hesitate to take it

that way. Why don't you tell me what it is that makes me so special I have to be killed? Tell me that?"

"I almost wonder how smart you are," she said. "What do you really think this is all about?"

"How many times do I have to tell you that I don't know!" he said. "I fell into this just a few hours ago, and I've been playing it strictly off the cuff so far."

"You must have had some idea. Some notion. At least a guess at what you were selling," she said. "What did you think it was?"

"I had only one lead," Mike Shayne told her. "The police identified Gilda Gould and they think her connections involve smuggling."

One of the men behind Shayne laughed out loud. The woman silenced him with a look.

"Gilda Gould didn't know any more than your Lucy Hamilton did," she said. "The girl was hired to fly the purse down and switch it with me. She was going to be killed later on anyway. I just speeded it up when I decided she'd bungled things so badly I had to shoot her in the airport. That was a poor lead, and yet in a way it wasn't too far from the mark. Next time I'll have to check the courier's background more closely."

There was a knock on the door to the hallway. One of the men opened up and Archibald Manchester came into the room. He looked at Mike Shayne almost as if he didn't recognize him at all and then walked over

to the table where the woman sat.

"Well?" she asked. "Did you find it?"

"Not yet," the lawyer said. "It's got to be there someplace but I haven't found it yet. Have you searched him?"

"Turn his pockets out," she commanded.

The men went through all of Shayne's pockets. They spread out his handkerchief and piled wallet and all the trivia on top of it and then made a bundle which Manchester picked up.

"I'll take this upstairs," Manchester said. "It has to be in here somewhere."

"You're a damn fool," the woman said. "He's done just what I would have in his place. He's sold you a lot of junk and held it out to blackmail us with."

"Oh now, Adal!"

"I said you were a damned fool. If I hadn't meant to kill him anyway, your using my name would have clinched it. How does it feel to kill a man, Archy?"

Manchester jumped back. "Don't talk that way. I'm not responsible for what you do. Not at all. I'm an attorney, and an officer of the court and I'll have nothing to do with murder. Nothing to do with killing. I never killed anybody in my life, and you know it."

"You're a stupid, cowardly little man," she said. "I'd spit on you except you aren't worth the trouble. Now get out of here."

"I'm going," he said. "I'm going. Only don't you be in any hurry. I'm sure I'll find it yet. I know what Mr. Chen will do if he doesn't get those equations. I just don't want him to do it to me. Anybody else yes, but not me."

He moved to the door with a side-wise scuttling walk that was almost crablike. "Remember. You wait till I examine all this stuff carefully."

Then he was gone.

"He won't find it, will he?" the woman called Ada asked Mike Shayne. "You and I both know that, so now we can dispense with the preliminaries. For a big-time lawyer he talks too much out of court. Not only did he blurt my name, he's also given you Chen to work on. But, it won't do you much good!"

"He'll find what he's looking for," Mike Shayne said, playing for time and his life, "if it ever was in that damned purse. I'm beginning to think it wasn't. I think you're looking for a needle that never was in the haystack in the first place."

"It was there," Ada said. "I don't think you quite realize how serious this is, Mr. Shayne. Jack—" she nodded to one of the men in the background.

The man stepped forward and put his hand on Mike Shayne's neck. His fingers felt cold and damp. He moved his hand just a trifle and applied a karate pressure grip.

The pain was agonizing. The big detective's body stiffened and con-



vulsed. He grasped for air and tried desperately not to moan.

"You see?" she said.

The man behind Shayne shifted his grip and squeezed again. Mike Shayne fainted.

VIII

MIKE SHAYNE swam back to consciousness out of a bottomless gulf of agony. His body was limp and soaked with sweat. He didn't know what had been done to him, but he knew it was a torture beyond anything that he'd ever experienced in the past. He couldn't take this sort of thing indefinitely without losing either his life or his sanity, and he knew it perfectly well.

The woman called Ada knew it too.

"You see, Mr. Shayne," she said and smiled that mirthless smile of hers.

Shayne tried to talk, but nothing came out but a hoarse gasp.

Ada ignored that. "I want to be perfectly sure you understand that this is the showdown. You have come into possession of something that we must have. Don't make any mistake. I said must have."

"Is it that valuable?" Mike Shayne managed.

"Oh yes," she said. "It isn't even the money value, although I assure you that a payment of a million dollars is involved. The thing that makes absolutely sure that I will stop at nothing is that my buyer, the person who will pay me the million dollars, will also kill me if I fail to make delivery. You see?"

"I begin to see," Shayne said. His body was still weak and painwracked, but his brain was beginning to race. For the first time he began to see what this deadly puzzle was all about. He had a first glimmering idea of a desperate move he might make to save himself.

"That's good," the remorseless voice said. "It will be to your advantage that you do see and cooperate. That way you can die quickly and without pain, as Gilda Gould died with a bullet in the brain. Otherwise I will have Jack kill you slowly with pain: Long before he is finished you will beg for the bullet. You are

a strong man, a proud man, but you will beg to die."

"I know that," Mike Shayne said. "It would help if I knew what you are looking for."

"Just tell us what you removed from the bag. Just tell us that and let us judge. We know you took something out, because it isn't there now. The man who put it there expects us to find it and pass it on to someone else. If we do, we get paid a million dollars. If we don't we very likely get killed because the buyer will think we held out, but you'll die first of course."

"It isn't quite that easy. I'm certain I removed nothing from the bag," Shayne said. He felt strength beginning to seep back into his big body as the waves of pain dimmed. He wanted to go on talking to give himself time to recover.

"I have a right to know," he said, and somehow managed a smile to put against hers. "If I'm going to die, I think I have a right to know what for."

He could see that Ada was impressed. She didn't answer except by the negative gesture of letting him go on talking.

"I think the police are right," Shayne said. "This is a case of smuggling, but not the sort they think it is. You aren't involved in smuggling dope or diamonds into the United States. No. I think you are smuggling something out of this country. The purse was just an envelope to de-

liver this something to you so you could pass it on."

He knew by the growing tension in the room that he was right. The three men behind him shifted their feet uneasily.

Fingers touched Shayne's neck again.

"Let me kill him," the man Jack pleaded.

"Not yet, you fool," she said. "We don't have it yet. Go on, Mr. Shayne."

"So I have to think," Mike Shayne said. "What is worth a million dollars and small enough so I can't find it in a purse? Nothing material. Not a diamond. It has to be information, and my mind tells me your buyer has to be an enemy government."

"I knew you were intelligent," she said. "Go on. Tell us where it is and you have earned the quick and the easy death. That's worth talking for."

"Of course," Shayne said. "It was right under my nose all the time, and I never saw it. That kind of immensely valuable property can be carried very small. That sort of information can be made into microdots. There was a piece of paper in the bag with printing on it. Where is the formula for a new germ warfare plague culture?"

"Ah," she said. Her eyes dilated and she rose up out of the chair. Blood ran to her face and her body tensed with almost sexual excitement. Her voice was vibrant.

"Where?" she asked. "Where is it?"



"If I tell you I'm dead," Shayne said.

"If you don't — she looked past him at Jack.

Shayne struggled to his feet. The belt around his arms was loose enough so he knew he could twist out of it, but he didn't try yet.

"It's a stalemate," he said. "I put it in a public trash can because I thought it wasn't important. Only I know what it looks like amongst all that trash and paper. You take me there and I'll give it to you. For my life."

Ada hesitated.

"Around seven o'clock this morning the trash can will be emptied into a truck for the incinerator," Shayne said. "I'll only have to take your torture for a little while, and it will be too late for you."

Her eyes flashed with what he could have sworn was admiration.

"All right," she said. "You hold the ace. Take us to the paper and give it to us and we'll turn you loose there in the street. I promise you."

He knew perfectly well that she was lying. It was what he would do in her place. Once he gave them the paper they wanted, they'd kill him and leave his body in the street.

"I agree," he said.

It worked as he had known it would. For just a moment they all relaxed their guards. The excitement was too contagious.

Mike Shayne pushed his elbows together and straightened his arms behind his back. The belt twisted

around his arms began to slip down towards his wrists.

"We better hurry," he said to divert their attention. "It's a long way to drive and I'm not exactly sure when the trash pick up truck goes by."

He twisted his wrists and pulled one hand free and then the other.

Without even looking behind him his right hand reached back and caught the man named Jack by the waistband and belt buckle. Jack was a small man. Shayne twisted his body, yanked Jack forward and rolled him over his right hip.

Jack let out a squawk. Shayne got him with both hands picked him up and threw him across the desk into Ada's face. The two of them smashed back against the wall and down to the floor in a tangle of arms and legs. Shayne completed his spin to the left to face the other two hoods at his rear.

The smaller man who had long sideburns, was already almost on top of him. Shayne brought up his knee into the man's groin. The hood screamed. His swarthy face went chalk white and his body convulsed in a paralysis of pain. Shayne shoved him aside.

The bigger man was Shayne's own size and his scarred face showed long experience at the art of close order fighting. This one had killed with his hands more than once, and he was ready to do it again.

He kicked for Mike Shayne's face with a number twelve foot in a heavy

shoe. Shayne grabbed for the ankle and missed, fell partly off balance and steadied himself with his right hand on the desk top.

From the floor Ada was yelling: "Take him. Don't kill him."

Sideburns was screaming like a broken-legged horse on a battlefield.

None of them had had their guns out because they thought Mike Shayne's arms were bound. Now the big hood went for the forty-five he had in a shoulder holster under his left arm. If he got it out he'd likely shoot, whatever the woman wanted. He was a brute and a killer.

Mike Shayne hadn't time for anything fancy. He bounced back off the desk top and dove at the hood. His head was lowered so as to smash into the hood's face. The concussion almost knocked them both out, but Shayne recovered first. He swung a round-house right, and the hood was down.

Shayne bent over the prostrate form and got the gun out of its holster.

Ada and Jack froze where they were then. The big hood was out cold and Sideburns' screams were trailing off in whimpers.

There was a sudden pounding on the door to the hall and a sound of voices outside.

"Oh hell," Shayne said. He swung to face the door — prepared to shoot it out with the rest of Ada's hoods.

The door flew open and Will Gentry stormed into the room, followed

by a half dozen uniformed men with guns drawn. An hour later in Will Gentry's office, Mike Shayne said, "I never saw a face that pleased me more. I thought for sure it was just more of that woman's gunsels come to polish me off. Then the angels brought you instead."

"It wasn't angels," Gentry said. "Not unless that hard drinking string bean over there has grown wings."

Tim Rourke grinned from his chair.

"Nary a wing," he said, "just brains. I knew you'd need Will and the marines."

"How?" Shayne said, and took a swallow of brandy. "How did you know?"

"That's easy," Rourke said with a laugh. "The power of the press. One of our young men from the *News* saw you throwing money away outside.

the Comanche and took a picture. When he brought it in for the morning edition the photo lab boys recognized your ugly mug and called me."

"I figured bad trouble. The man who took the shot said he thought he saw you go back into the old gambling house with some men. I called Will and you know the rest."

"Sometimes," Will Gentry said, "I think Tim has the makings of a detective himself." His phone rang and he picked it up.

When he put the instrument down he turned to Shayne. "The Federals found some highly classified information pasted over period marks on that clipping from the *News*. There'll be a reward to you and Lucy for its recovery."

Mike Shayne finished his brandy. "I think I've already had my reward," he said.

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by BRETT HALLIDAY

TROUBLE IN XANADU

by GEORGE ANTONICH



ONCE WE'D CROSSED the California-Nevada border, the last stretch of thirty uninhabited miles over snow-packed mountain roads was the worst of the entire trip. Angie, my wife, lay huddled against the clammy leather seat, her teeth chattering in the bitter cold.

"G-g-good Lord," she complained, for perhaps the hundredth time since we'd left San Francisco, "you paid a small fortune for this pile of bolts — and now the d-damn heater won't work!"

I couldn't blame her for being angry. My own bone marrow felt frozen solid. It was all I could do to keep from replacing the wire I'd disconnected, giving up my carefully laid plan. But that was impossible. I was in too deep to back out.

"It won't be long now, darling." I forced a false note of cheer into my

voice. "Once we get to the cabin I'll build a roaring fire and make some hot toddies. Life will look much brighter to you then. You'll see."

"That," Angie grumbled, "is a very poor choice of words, considering that we buried p-poor Max only this morning."

"Sorry," I apologized. "I shouldn't have brought it up."

The Max to whom she referred had been a very special friend of ours. Four nights before he had been killed, brutally beaten to death. The police had arrested his killer and secured a full confession after a whirlwind investigation of only a few hours, due in large part to information supplied by me. After the dismal morning funeral we had packed for a few days sojourn in our mountain cabin to try to forget the shocking incident.

*She had everything a woman needs for a man.
Maybe that was her trouble. Anyway, another
man had found it out. So — he died messily.
And soon she would follow her lover boy.*



Angie had fallen moodily silent and was hugging her knees, trying to form a tight ball of warmth. I swerved the car abruptly to avoid a snow drift half covering the road. The action tumbled her against me. She came up muttering angrily.

"I am sorry," I said.

"Is that all you can d-do," she spluttered, "apologize?"

I stared out through the windshield at the passing banks of virgin white snow.

I can kill a cheating wife, I almost snapped. Instead, I mumbled, "I am sorry, darling. Please try to relax. Believe me we're almost at the end of the line."

Thankfully, she kept quiet. I squinted against the glare of the swirling snow outside, and the monotonous beat of the windshield wipers had an hypnotic effect on me. I could see my own grim reflection in the glass, and more. It was uncanny, like watching an instant replay of the last two years of my life.

In the beginning I had never really meant to kill her. When I first worked out the bothersome details and realized my plan would work, the queerest sort of feeling overtook me. Strangely excited, I remember whispering: "Bernie Foster, you have the unique distinction of being the only incipient killer in the world with a perfect murder plan — but no victim!"

It had started as a harmless game, a fascinating exercise of the mind to get the old cranial juices flowing. I'm

the kind of guy who loves problems. Math sends me. I set up impossible chess situations, then solve them.

"You're the only man I know," Angie used to marvel, "who works crossword puzzles with a ballpoint pen!"

Every night after work I turn to the sports page and dope out the horses. I've never bet a dime in my life, but I find it stimulating to chart breeding and past performance, and come up with winners. But strictly on paper. I have this theory that if I ever dare to back my deductions with direct action, the whole game will blow up in my face.

Sometimes I even work out ingenious schemes where I knock over a bank, an armored car, or do away with the head of state of some hated foreign power. Of course, I never carry out my elaborate plots. I'm forty years old and have never had so much as a traffic ticket against me. I am definitely not the criminal type. It's just that I find working out these exploits an exciting pastime to keep the mind razor keen. Mental jogging, I call it.

I suppose it was inevitable that I finally began wondering how, if I really wanted to, I could kill my wife and get away with it. I mean, doesn't every married man?

Not that I for one moment entertained any serious intention of doing it, you understand. Lord knows, I loved Angie with a passion bordering on frenzy. What's more, I liked her, too. And with some of the weird

ideas our modern women have, that's not as easy as it may sound. After all, I'm in the bar business and I have seen women at their very worst.

Oh, but my Angie was something else!

A sprightly twenty-four, chin high to me, with gentle doe-brown eyes that could melt a loan shark's heart, she had the lush-lush kind of figure that bikinis were designed for. From the moment I saw her I knew she was the one for me.

My firm resolve melting a bit with fond memories, I turned to Angie. "There's a thermos of coffee and brandy in the back seat, darling. Why don't you pour us some?"

She unwound her lithe body and reached for the thermos.

"I'm beginning to think this trip was a b-big mistake," she said. "W-we should have stayed home and kept the business going."

"Nonsense," I protested. "We deserve a little time off."

Our business was a small bar called the Trade-Inn on Van Ness Avenue in the heart of San Francisco's automobile row. It took all my years of saving as a bartender to buy the place, and for a long time I operated on a very slim budget indeed. I pulled the night shift, with no time off, then did the janitor work before going home at maybe four in the morning.

To save on repair bills I took a correspondence course on motor repairs to keep the ice machine and re-

frigeration in running order. In short, I did everything possible to make the bar a paying proposition. But to be honest with you, I was barely able to make ends meet.

Then Angie had come into my life.

Sipping the warming coffee-brandy from the plastic cup she'd handed me, I smiled toward my wife. "Do you remember the first night you came to work for me?"

"Please," she said, "I am not in the m-mood for reminiscing."

I was. I'd advertised for a cocktail waitress, and she showed up. From her first night at the Trade-Inn, when she arrived in a flaming red dress cut disturbingly low, business had zoomed. And so had my blood pressure. My feelings swept from wild infatuation to a kind of goddess-on-a-pedestal reverence. I wanted to marry the girl.

To my amazement, three weeks later, she agreed to be my wife. I gulped at my drink, remembering how our honeymoon in Carmel had been cut short by a severe attack of asthma on my part. When we returned to the city, do you think I could keep Angie home? Not on your life. She insisted on continuing her work.

"We're a partnership now," she told me. "Whatever I can do to help you will eventually help me, too."

It was difficult for me at first. I could see all those panting customers, most of them young and eager salesmen, eyeing my new bride like slav-

ering wolves in a sheep pasture. But Angie knew how to cope with them. Her interest in the business and her energy were boundless. Nights when some young buck took on too much liquor, Angie would sober him up with steaming cups of coffee, holding his hand and talking in hushed whispers in a dark back booth.

Or she would coax one of them to dance with her.

"You need the exercise," she would chide the inebriated young man. Then she would cling to him, making him keep moving in her arms, dance after dance, until he was back in shape. Often she would disappear out the back door with one of them and return later, a bit disheveled.

"The poor dear boy was awfully sick," she would tell me. "But he's feeling much better now."

Along about then we met Max Graham. Young and ruggedly handsome, he went to work as a salesman for the used car lot across the street. Before long he became one of our steadiest customers. It was his habit to steer prospective buyers to the bar and, after a few genial drinks, make his sale. There was only one thing wrong with Max. He couldn't hold his liquor. At least twice a week he would take on a load he could not handle. But do you think Angie let him risk life and limb by driving in his condition? Not on your life.

"I'll just run him home, darling," she would tell me. "It would look bad for us if a Liquor Control Board

agent saw a customer in this shape."

She would be gone for maybe an hour or so. Max must have lived quite a distance from his work, I often thought. But that never stopped Angie from carrying out her errand of mercy. When she came back, poor darling, her clothing would be rumpled, her face drawn.

"Oh wow!" she would exclaim. "I had to practically wrestle the poor guy into his room."

Some nights when she drove Max home she wouldn't have returned by the time I'd closed up and finished the janitor work. I would smile and take a cab to our apartment, secure in the knowledge that my Angie was out doing the one thing she enjoyed most, helping someone in distress. Often she would come home and just plop herself into bed without a word to me; dog-tired, but always with a kind of pleased grin on her flushed face.

At those times I remember thinking: *This is what it's all about, Bernie — two people working together like this, making a life for each other, trying to build a prosperous business.* I was proud of my Angie. Real proud!

Inevitably, such catering to customer needs paid off. As the business prospered, we were able to splurge a bit. We moved into a spacious new apartment on posh Nob Hill. Angie went on a wild shopping spree, selecting a much needed new wardrobe. Both of us being fond of the outdoors, we bought a small weekend cabin near Lake Tahoe, in the scenic

Ponderosa country of Nevada. And, thrill of thrills, I was able to put the down payment on an imported sports car I'd always dreamed of — the fabulous Xanadu Eight!

I handed the empty plastic cup back to Angie. "Remember when we bought this car, darling?"

"I certainly do," she snapped. And what a lemon it turned out to be. You should have bought one from Max."

"I was just thinking," I told her. "As good as life was for us, it was even better for Max, wasn't it? I mean, his success in the automobile business was nothing short of spectacular."

"Max had a good business head," Angie commented. "But please, Bernie, I'd rather not talk about it now."

I didn't press the point. I could still remember those lean days when Max first started working across the street. Often he would have to put his drinks on a tab. One night he'd rushed in looking like a scared rabbit.

"Bernie!" he'd cried, "old buddy, you've got to lend me a hundred bucks."

"That's a lot of loot, Max."

"I know. But this is a matter of life or death. I'll be honest with you old buddy. I owe my bookie, and he is one very mean hombre. If I don't pay up, he'll have me worked over. With this plate in my head, one blow could finish me."

Well, I'd pulled him out of that scrape, and several more. Then, in practically no time, he'd risen from



a mere salesman to a business tycoon. Incredibly he bought out his former boss — for cash. He threw out all the old clunkers and got himself a franchise to sell new Volkswagens.

About then, Angie finally decided a wife's place is in the home. She selected a girl to replace her at the Trade-Inn. Naturally, business dropped off a bit, but it was worth it to have Angie at home. Out of respect for her wishes I took to sleeping in the guest bedroom. I mean, coming home at three or four in the morning as I did it wasn't fair to disturb her rest. Oh, I would always look in on her, tippy-toeing softly in to feast my eyes on her. She had become a restless sleeper. The bed was always rumpled and her hair tousled from tossing about. The poor darling, I thought compassionately, was so lonesome without me beside her. I would kiss her gently on the forehead, then go to my own room to

dope out the horses for the next day.

Life was good. So good, I lost all interest in planning bank heists and political assassinations. I concentrated on the horses, and strictly as an exercise in mental jogging, I worked on the perfect wife-murder.

Then, on what I thought would be a routine Monday night, Mort Klein, the Xanadu Eight dealer, dropped in for a nightcap.

"Have you," he asked nervously, "experienced any problems with your car heater?"

I shook my head. "The car has been a dream in every way. But why do you ask?"

"We're going to have to recall some of the Xanadu Eights," he told me. His voice dropped to a confidential whisper. "I wouldn't want this spread around, Bernie. You understand?"

I didn't, and I told him so.

He glanced around like a James Bond character.

"Because of a fluke in the construction of the heater," he confided, "objectionable fumes from the engine compartment may be drawn into the passenger compartment, resulting in owner complaints." He finished his drink in a nervous gulp. "If you notice any peculiar odors coming from your heater, bring the car into our shop at once. We'll make it right."

The next day, armed with my knowledge of motors, and piqued by Mort Klein's obvious alarm, I checked out the heater. After only a

few minutes it became perfectly clear that a faulty head gasket, or even a few loosened bolts, would allow lethal carbon monoxide gasses to seep into the car by way of the heater.

And there it was, handed to me like a license to kill. The deadly fumes subtly entering the passenger compartment would so affect a driver's reflexes that he—or she—would end up off the road; in a head-on collision; or suffer death by asphyxiation. As in so many highway fatalities, it would most likely be chalked up to faulty driving, poor road conditions or a case of some sort of heart arrest. Even if carbon monoxide poisoning should be discovered, it would still work in my favor. With the testimony of other Xanadu Eight owners who's experienced heater difficulties, I could sue Mort Klein for every dime he had.

Once I realized the plan would work, I was in the unique position of having a perfect murder method at my disposal—but no victim!

That, however, was soon to change.

It changed with startling swiftness on the night of my accident. I was working behind the bar. Business was slow. I was drying glasses. One of them broke in my hand, gashing the crook between thumb and forefinger. I treated it with the first aid kit, but knew at once it was not going to stop bleeding. Since it was already past midnight, I closed early, went to the emergency hospital and had four

stitches taken in the wound. Then I went home.

How elated I felt! For the first time since our marriage I was arriving home two hours early. Perhaps Angie would still be awake. Perhaps, for a welcome change, I could expect something more than a gentle kiss on her forehead.

At the front door, force of habit made me slip my key noiselessly into the lock. Inside the apartment, the sunken livingroom was in darkness. But there was a beam of light spilling out from Angie's bedroom. Happily, I tippytoed toward it, planning to surprise her. At her doorway, I stopped short, a great red glob of anger forming behind my eyeballs.

Angie was not alone. Holding her in a frenzied embrace was my old buddy, Max Graham. I froze, shocked numb by the sight.

Then I heard Angie murmur, "How much longer must we go on like this, sweetheart? Why can't we tell Bernie and make a life of our own?"

"Are you out of your skull?" Max snapped. "Baby, that genius husband of yours is going to make me a millionaire! A few more winners from his dope sheet, and we can clean up. But you must stay with him a while longer. I've got to have more of his winners."

I backed slowly away from the doorway. My first thought was of the snub-nosed .38 in my dresser drawer. But no — with the lax new morality, the Unwritten Law would surely be

considered old-fashioned. There had to be another way, one that would leave me in the clear. Mort Klein had provided me a method of dealing with Angie. That left only Max. His death would be a problem. But I'm the kind of guy who loves his problems.

I let myself silently out of the apartment and returned at my usual time. I even forced myself to kiss my wife gently on the forehead before I went to my own room.

Now, beside me in the deep-freeze front seat, Angie stirred restlessly. "G-g-good Lord," she wined, "how much farther is it?"

"It won't be long now, darling." I peered at the road ahead. In another minute I saw what I'd been watching for. The turnout was a widened section of the road used for emergency stops. There was a telephone booth at one edge of the clearing. It was, I knew, exactly ten miles from our cabin. I braked gingerly and came to a stop beside the booth.

"Good idea," Angie said, her voice dripping sarcasm. "You can call me a cab — one with a h-heater in it."

I took off my gloves and fished a dime from my pocket.

"I don't like the looks of this weather," I told her. "Why don't you call the Automobile Association and get the latest forecast? I wouldn't want to get snowed in."

"Why me?" she whined.

"It'll warm you up to move

around a bit. While you make the call, I'll see if I can fix this damn heater."

When she left the car, grumbling, it took only a minute for me to reconnect the hot wire. Since I had already loosened the necessary bolts, I did not dare turn on the heater so far from the cabin.

Watching Angie in the booth, I had to fight back the impulse to gun the motor and crash into the booth. I could picture it tumbling end over end down the long drop — with my darling, unfaithful wife inside. But that would be too easy for her. She would never know what hit her — or why. I wanted her to know. I wanted her to know I knew. I wanted her to suffer as I had suffered.

Then she came back her teeth chattering. "There's no answer. The lines must be down. Did you fix the h-heater?"

I shook my head. "But don't worry, we'll be there soon."

I put the car in gear and moved out. Less than a mile from the cabin I shook with an exaggerated shiver. It didn't take much acting on my part. I felt half frozen.

"Wait till I see Mort Klein," I snapped. "I'll tell him what I think of this piece of junk." I cursed, then kicked at the heater, at the same time turning the console control knob to ON. Immediately, a warm rush of air flowed out to envelope us.

"Hey," Angie cried, "you should have tried that before. It always

works with the washing machine, too!"

I grinned and drove on. Minutes later we reached the cutoff to the cabin. Instead of driving in as I usually did, I pulled ahead a few feet, then backed into the driveway.

"It'll be easier to unload all our gear," I lied.

While I was cutting the motor, leaving the heater knob turned to its ON position, Angie slipped quickly out of the car.

"Don't bother with all that junk now," she pleaded. "Just hurry and build a fire."

I set the hand brake, then bent and jerked loose the wire connecting the push-button windows. The interior now airtight, I got out into the driveway. The snow had slacked off until it wasn't much more than a fine white mist. I started toward the cabin, then stopped. I turned and put my key back into the ignition. I wanted to make it as easy for her as possible.

Under the towering pines, the cabin was in dark shadows. It smelled of dampness and dead air from being closed. I opened a window, lighted a kerosene lamp, then built a crackling fire. While Angie changed into a warming sleep-suit, I fired up the butane stove and heated some water. By the time she'd come in from the bedroom I had two large, heavy mugs of hot rum ready and waiting.

My wife took her drink and stood with her backside to the fireplace.

"This drink is delicious," she said.

"Enjoy it," I told her. "It's the last one you'll ever have."

Her eyebrows arched. She snapped, "Don't tell me you forgot to bring more liquor?"

"It's not that," I said. "It's just that I intend to kill you."

She had been about to take another sip. Her hand stopped in mid-air. "What are you talking about? Are you out of your head?"

"I intend to kill you," I repeated, my voice calm. "Just as I killed your lover — old buddy boy Max."

Angie laughed shrilly. "Now I know you've flipped. We both know Max's killer is in jail. He confessed that he'd been hired by Max's bookie to beat him up for welshing on a bet."

I nodded. "Two things the muscleman didn't know. One was that Max never made the bet. The other was about the plate in Max's head. I never laid a finger on your lover, Angie, but I killed him just as surely as if I'd beaten him myself."

She looked up at me with the beginnings of belief in her eyes.

"Why would you want Max dead?"

I held up my hand. "Remember the night I cut this at work?" I told her of my early arrival — and what I'd seen.

"You knew all this time, and you said nothing — did nothing. Why, Bernie?"

"Are you out of your skull?" I snapped, mimicking Max's voice. "Baby, that genuis husband of yours

is going to make me a millionaire."

Angie gasped. "Good lord, you sound just like him!"

"I'm glad you think so," I grinned coldly. "So did Max's bookie when I called and placed a thousand dollar bet on a broken down nag that's still running."

"You — you did that?"

I nodded.

Angie spat in my face. I slapped her. She tried to back away. I caught her and slapped her again, forehand and backhand, carefully pulling my blows. I did not want her unconscious. I wanted her to make a run for it. To break away to the car. I stopped slapping and shoved her away, toward the door. I half turned; giving her the opportunity she needed to escape. Instead of running she lifted the heavy mug. From the corner of my eye I saw it arching toward me, but I was unable to move. The blow caught me flush on the side of the jaw. I heard the bone crush as my head rocked back. Bubbles of blood and saliva frothed up in my mouth. I felt sick to my stomach.

Angie had the range then, and hit me again. And again. My knees wobbled. I sank slowly to the floor. From far away I thought I heard her laugh, but it was impossible to be sure because of the heavy glob of nothingness that settled over me.

When I came to, I struggled to sit up. The pain almost flattened me again. I tried to reach for my throbbing jaw. Then I became aware

of the ropes binding my wrists and ankles. From outside, I heard the smooth purring sound of the Xanadu Eight starting. I tried to yell, but no intelligible sound came out of my shattered jaw.

Then Angie came back into the cabin. She was carrying the thermos bottle. Without looking at me, she filled it with coffee and brandy. I groaned and spluttered, trying to make my voice come through. But the sound was more like a bubbling gurgle.

Then Angie was at the door. I shook my head, rage and frustration sweeping over me. I couldn't let her go — *I couldn't!* With the heater seeping deadly carbon monoxide fumes into the car she wouldn't make it ten miles from the cabin. Already the flames in the fireplace were rapidly dwindling. The window I'd opened earlier let in a frigid blast of air. Once she was gone there was nothing I could do, bound as I was. Nothing but lay there until I froze to death.

I moaned pitifully to catch her attention.

With an impatient shrug, Angie came to stand over me.

"Relax," she said, her voice filled with loathing. "I'm not going to let you die. That was my first impulse, to beat you to a pulp as you had poor Max beaten. But I wouldn't want to go to jail for a slimy creep like you."

I managed a strangled gasp meant to express my thanks. Angie went to the table came back with a kitchen knife.

"You have a choice," she told me. "I'll cut the ankle ropes only and let you come with me, or you can wait here, tied up, until I send the sheriff from Kyburz. Make up your mind, Bernie. *It's your problem.*"

I stared at her for a long moment. Then I fell back to the floor and giggled crazily, the irony of it exploding in my brain. For a man who loved problems — this one promised to be a dandy!



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When the crime warlords gathered in Chicago, one man's name spawned more fear than even Scarface Capone. Nitti, his name was. The Enforcer. The Boss man. The guy who decreed which foe must die, and how, and when. Here is the amazing true story men feared to tell, the infamous saga of—

FRANK NITTI: AL CAPONE'S CAPO KILLER

by DAVID MAZROFF

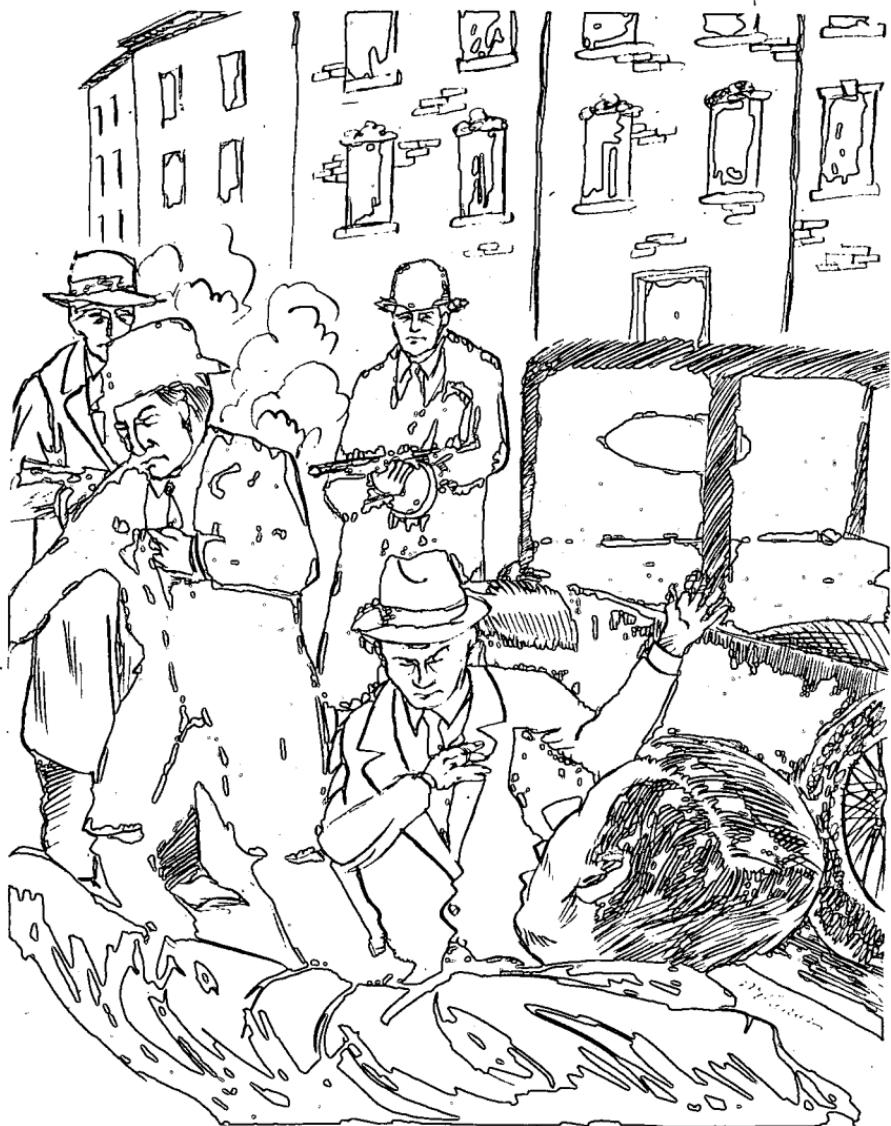
WHEN AL CAPONE was sentenced to eleven years in a federal prison for income tax evasion in 1931, the struggle to take over the mob began. Tony Accardo? Paul "The Waiter" Ricca? Marshall Caifano? Sam "Mooney" Giancana? or Frank Nitti?

Accardo, a tough gunman who had risen under Capone and Ricca, was a little too young. So was Caifano, marked with a cauliflower ear as a souvenir from the days when he boxed under the name of Joe Rosso. Though he stood only five feet five inches tall in his elevator shoes, Caifano was as hard and tough

as Accardo but, like Accardo, he was not ready to move into the top spot. Ricca didn't have the organization ability or the guts to fight the rough boys. That left Sam Giancana and Frank Nitti. Nitti won.

Frank Nitti, during his heyday of Al Capone's rule, was a devil who plundered the streets of Chicago with devastating violence. He was Capone's *Capo de Capo* of the murder brigade that included Machine-gun Jack McGurn, Frank McErlane, Fred "Killer" Burke, Willie Heeney, the opium smoking dandy, skinny as a string of spaghetti and weighted down with two .38 caliber automatics that

**THE STORY of a KILLER so INCREDIBLY EVIL
No Man Dared Write the TRUTH About Him**



were as much a part of him as his fawn-colored spats which he wore in all seasons,

These hoods and a few other sundry assassins were the core of cool gangsters whose specialty was the dealing of death.

Frank Nitti was *The Enforcer*, a cognomen he earned justly. The name was highly publicized in the TV series starring Robert Stack as Eliot Ness, the FBI agent who was responsible in part for breaking up a part of the mob.

Nitti came into the Capone gang when Johnny Torrio was still boss and Capone was his lieutenant. With Capone, Nitti began to cut down rivals who harbored ambitions to move into Torrio-Capone territory..

On this particular day Capone called Nitti into his suite in the Lexington Hotel on Michigan and 22nd Street for a little talk concerning several minor problems.

Nitti listened as Capone spoke, marking everything in his mind, the names of the men to be straightened out or knocked off for offenses against *The Combination*. It was called that in those days, not *The Mafia* or *Cosa Nostra*. Those names came later, after both Capone and Nitti were cold in their graves.

"Get it done, Frank," Capone said. He rose from behind the desk, puffed on his big cigar and nodded to Nitti. "Take any of the boys you will need. That's your department."

"Sure, Al. I'll straighten it all out."

After he left Al Capone, Nitti

called a meeting. He told Jack McGurn, "Get the boys together right away. At the Four Deuces. I'll want Jimmy Mondi, Mops Volpe, Frankie Pope, Jimmy Belcastro, Pepe and John Genaro, Larry Mangano, Rocco Fannelli, and Danny Vallo. You, too, Jack."

"Sure thing, Frank. I'll have them there in an hour."

In less than an hour the men gathered at the Four Deuces, a furniture store used as a front at 2222 South Wabash Avenue.

The large room at the back of the store was furnished as an office. It contained a huge conference table, a dozen padded chairs, a bar, and in a concealed cupboard an array of weapons.

Nitti called the meeting to order and everyone stopped talking and looked toward *The Enforcer*. He spoke in a low tone, much as if he were discussing a sales program for a new product. However, this was an old product — muscle; mayhem, and murder.

Warrants ordering four executions were first on the agenda.

Nitti said, "Tony Russo and Vincent Spicussa, a couple of torpedoes from St. Louis, Anthonio Torchio of New York, and Sam Valente from Cleveland have to be hit. That smart jerk, Joe Aiello, brought them in to knock off Al. They're on the near North Side in Aiello's territory. Russo and Spicussa hang out at the Playhouse, at 550 North Clark. Jack, you

take a couple of the boys with you and do the job."

"Okay, Frank. McGurn nodded to two of the men. They nodded back in agreement.

"Mops, I learned that Torchio and Valente live it up at the Post Time, at 357 North Clark."

"I know the joint," Mops Volpe replied.

"They've been living it up too long," Nitti said with a wry grin. "Cut it short for them."

"Sure thing, Frank. No problem."

"Take two men with you. You know what they look like?"

Mops Volpe described the two men.

"That's right. Who do you want with you?"

"I'll take Willie Heeney and Genaro. Okay?"

"Sure. Now then, there's a little difficulty with Myles and Klondike O'Donnell."

Eyebrows went up at these words, because peace had been made with the West Side O'Donnells. They were assigned the West Side of the city and had kept in line.

"I know what you guys are thinking," Nitti said, "that we had an agreement with those two. They couldn't keep up their end. They been muscling in on Terry Druggan and Frankie Lake and Terry has talked to Al and asked for help. Those boys use our beer and we're obliged to help them. Mondi, you and Rocco toss a couple of pineapple's into the O'Donnells' warehouse. That will tell

'em the score and the name of the game. Okay?"

"Just like you say, Frank," Jimmy Mondi replied. "I got a lot of fruit on hand. Received a fresh shipment from Hawaii the other day." He burst into loud laughter at his joke.

Nitti grinned and some of the men around the table joined in.

The entire scene, macabre as it was, had a fantastic aspect to it in that four men had been sentenced to violent and bloody death, yet the climate around the table was almost as if the conversation had centered around some mundane experiment in the raising of garden vegetables.

This was Frank Nitti, the ultimate killer. His face was an index of his character. It was pasty, with a grim, unsmiling mouth and beady glittering eyes like those of a vicious boar.

Nitti held human life cheaply and had, in the past, risked his own recklessly. If he knew the meaning of fear, there was nothing in his record to indicate it. Gangland took no chances with him, less than they took with Al Capone, Jack McGurn, or Willie Heeney. He was regarded with the deference due to a man of his murderous prestige.

Several attempts had been made on his life but the fear he inspired was his coat of mail. He was credited with having killed fifteen men. There was no pity or remorse in him. Neither a plea for mercy nor the helplessness of his victims moved him to compassion, and he killed with the cruelty of a tiger.

As the men started to leave he said to McGurn, "Wait a minute, Jack. I want to talk to you. Alone."

McGurn nodded and sat back down in his chair as the other men filed out of the room.

"I want to show you something, Jack," Nitti said, and went to a cupboard at the rear of the room, unlocked it and removed a weapon. He held it cradled in his arms with loving tenderness as McGurn regarded it curiously.

"It's a Thompson submachine gun, Jack," Nitti said. "Weighs only fifteen pounds. The drum holds a hundred cartridges. Steel-jacketed, .45 caliber slugs. The automatic feed turns all hundred loose in less than a minute and you can reload it with a new drum in after fifteen seconds. Beautiful, huh?"

"Yeah, it sure is," McGurn replied. "Let me look at it."

Nitti handed McGurn the weapon and Jack cradled it in his arms, held the stock against his body and moved the barrel, which was like an automatic rifle, to and fro.

"A hundred slugs in less than a minute, huh? Frankie, you could cut a guy in two with one of these babies." McGurn smiled. "Russo and Spicussa, Torchio and Valente are going to get a real surprise."

"That's the idea. When we cut those guys down with these babies the bums in this town who want to muscle in are going to look for holes to crawl into. I can hardly wait."

McGurn said, "But I thought you

wanted me and the other two boys to handle this."

"Sure, sure." He waved a deprecating hand. "Nothing to it. That spiel was for their benefit. I'll tell them there's been a change in plans. You and I will handle the Tommy guns. We'll put Little New York behind the wheel."

"Will Al okay Campagna to drive on a caper like this?"

"Sure. Why not? I handle this end of the business and what I say goes." He waved his hand again in a gesture of assurance. "Don't worry about it, Jack."

"What about the big man in New York? He's pretty tight with Campagna. He might not like the idea of making Campagna a driver on four hits."

"You talking about Gaetano Ricci? Forget it."

"I'm not so sure, Frankie. I think Al and Ricci have other ideas for Campagna."

Nitti's mouth tightened into a thread-like line and a muscle in his jaw twitched. "I don't give a damn what Ricci thinks. He's not running Chicago."

Nitti was wrong. Gaetano Ricci, alias "Bobo," alias Anthony Gobels, was a six foot three inch giant, at this time in his early thirties. He was a man of mystery, without a police record. He later was picked up by Chicago cops on a charge of carrying a concealed weapon while in the company of Campagna.

In typical Chicago fashion, the

court held that the arrests were illegal because Bill Drury, a tough, colorful cop, who had busted the two men, didn't have a search warrant.

Ricci and Campagna were discharged, though the weapons were confiscated by the court. It was Ricci who was responsible for the worldwide setup of the Mafia, who welded the gangs of the country into a solid combine. He was very fond of Campagna.

Jack McGurn said, "Is this the only machine gun we have?"

Nitti's features relaxed and he permitted a grin to cross his face. "Nope. I've got four more. You take that baby and go out into the sticks and practice with it for about three or four days. When you're ready, let me know and we'll go out and do the job. Meanwhile, I'll put a couple of tails on those guys so we'll have them when we want them. Okay?"

"Sure, Frankie. What about ammo? You have some more?"

"Boxes of it. Come over here." He led McGurn to the cupboard. "Help yourself. Take what you think you'll need to get you familiar with that baby."

McGurn took three boxes of slugs from the cupboard. He turned to Nitti. "You been practicing with one of these?"

"For about two weeks. I've got it down pat," Nitti grinned. "It makes beautiful music, Jack. Wait until you've tried it out."

"I'm on my way. See you later."



AL CAPONE

The killing of Russo and Spicussa came a week after Frank Nitti and Jack McGurn held their private little conversation. Campagna was behind the wheel. Nitti and McGurn caught Russo and Spicussa in the street as they half staggered toward their hotel.

"Hey, Russo!" Nitti yelled, and Russo and Spicussa turned toward the car and peered half seeing in the darkness of the night.

"Whatta yah want?" Russo yelled back.

"I wanna say goodnight!" Nitti yelled back.

Russo yelled an obscene word and

started to turn. It was as far as he got.

Nitti aimed his machine gun at Russo's figure and McGurn aimed his Tommy at Spicussa. Both guns exploded simultaneously. The shock of the heavy slugs spun both men. They were hit with about a dozen bullets before they fell. As they were falling Nitti and McGurn kept firing. The blood poured from the bodies of both men and turned the sidewalk crimson.

Russo's face was torn to ribbons and the dozen or so holes in his body drained his life's blood. McGurn was more merciful. He saved Spicussa's features so that the St. Louis hood would have a decent burial. He aimed instead for the belly and all but cut Spicussa in two.

"Hit it, Yorkie!" Nitti cried to Campagna. "Let's move!"

Little New York gunned the motor and the car sped away in high speed.

Torchio and Valente suffered the same fate a week later. The killings shook up the Chicago underworld. Joe Aiello, who had recruited the four men to knock off Al Capone, went into hiding, certain that Capone knew he had brought the four hoods into town for the express purpose of knocking him off. He told Bugs Moran and Dion O'Bannion, the two gang leaders who controlled the North Side, that he had heard he was next on the list for execution.

"I'll lay low for a week or so until

you guys find out what Capone is up to.

"Machine guns!" O'Bannion roared. "Capone ain't the only one who can get machine guns. Moran, you and I will get some too. We'll show that dirty heathen that two can play at that game. Send your boys out to buy about a half dozen of them. No, dammit! Get a dozen. Two dozen! We'll give those bastards on the South Side a taste of their own medicine!"

It was the start of an underworld warfare that saw almost a thousand men slaughtered in the streets of the city. It was a relentless, savage, gruesome era that lasted for ten years. The man behind it was Frank "The Enforcer" Nitti, and behind him was the implacable killer, Machine Gun Jack McGurn.

After the four killings, Frank Nitti was in Capone's suite in the Lexington Hotel. Capone was scowling.

"When did you buy the machine guns, Frank?" He asked in an even tone.

"About two months ago."

"Where?" Capone rose from behind his desk, chewed on his big cigar, and walked to a window facing Michigan Boulevard and stood there with his back toward Nitti.

"From a guy named Bozo Shupe."

"I know about him. An ex-con. Where'd he get them?"

"He got them from a guy named Russell Thompson who bought them from Peter Van Frantzius. Pete got them in New York."

"I see. Can they be traced to you?"

"Not hardly. Shupe is a stand-up guy. He won't talk."

"He might. The heat is really on. Four killings in a week. By a new underworld weapon. A machine gun. Have you read the papers?"

"I never read the papers."

"This time you should have. Torrio had a visit from two of the boys from downtown. They don't like it. They don't like the heat. Torrio denied that we had had anything to do with the killings. Maybe those two guys bought it and maybe they didn't."

Nitti was getting annoyed with Capone's questioning. The way he looked at it was that he had followed Capone's order to hit Russo, Spicussa, Torchio, and Valente. How he did it was left up to him.

He said, "Look, Al, you wanted these guys taken. Lou didn't tell me if you wanted them slapped to death, drowned, or buried in cement. My reasons for the machine guns was to get a little respect from Dion O'Bannion, Bugs Moran and Joe Aiello. I heard Aiello has taken a powder, hiding out because he thinks his number is up next."

"He'll be back," Capone snapped. "What I'm talking about is altogether different from what you're talking about, and don't hand me any bull about it." He chewed hard on his cigar. "When you do something that will bring heat on us I want to know why. You bought

some machine guns. That's fine. I'll okay that. When you use them in four killings in less than a week you burn us up.

"You don't think Bill Drury is stupid, do you? He's a wise cop and he can't be bought. I'll bet you a grand to a nickel that he's sitting in the DA's office right now screaming his head off. He's not going to sleep until he breaks this case."

"Oh, hell! How's he going to do it — break McGurn or Campagna? They don't even talk to God or the devil!"

Capone turned away from Nitti and walked across the room, turned back to face *The Enforcer*. His face was dark with anger. "Don't be dumb, Frank! What I'm trying to tell you is that if you were going to use choppers, then you should have played it cool, one at a time, spread out, a week apart, two weeks apart.

"It would have been a helluva lot more effective that way. Those guys on the North Side would be wetting their pants day and night worrying about who was next. And there would have been a helluva lot less heat on us."

Nitti regarded Capone through hot eyes. There was a heavy thumping in his chest and dark anger and resentment gushed through his entire being. It was something he was never to forget, this raking over the coals, the humiliation of being subjected to the treatment of a second rate member of the mob.

At this moment the door opened and Johnny Torrio came in, Torrio the smoothie, the brain, the organization man. Torrio looked from Al Capone to Nitti and shook his head.

"Bad business," he said cryptically. "The papers are calling the killings inhuman slaughter, organized warfare, and they're pointing the finger at us, not directly by name but if we aren't the South Side gangsters, then who is?"

"For crissake's, Johnny," Nitti broke in, "those guys came into town to take you and Al. Ask Al. Aiello brought them in to do the job. Ten grand a head. I took them on Al's orders."

"Al tell you to use these machine guns?" Torrio turned to Al. "Did you?"

"No, he didn't!" Nitti retorted. "That was my idea, and I still think it was a damned good one."

"Do you?" Torrio replied. "Or don't you think that O'Bannion and Moran will also get some of those things and burn down some of our men. And maybe Al and me, and you, too, once they find out you were behind it."

"Hell!" Nitti shot back. "They don't know who did it, and never will. If that's what's worrying you then you can forget it. Besides, they haven't got the guts to come into our territory."

Torrio shook his head in a mild gesture of despair. "You had the guts to go into their territory, Frank. Do you think you have a corner on guts?

Hymie Weiss will tail you around the world if O'Bannion tells him to. So will Joe Aiello. I know those guys. I know them better than you do."

"All right!" Nitti yelled. "You know them better than I do. What now? I used machine guns. I dropped four guys who were brought in from out of town to take you and Al. You wanna hang me, or what?"

"You're a dumb bastard!" Capone broke in. "What you don't understand is that this is an organization. The orders come from the top! You understand? Everything is going smooth and then you upset the whole apple cart by this kind of killing. The public doesn't give a damn if we knock each other off, one at a time.

"They think it's good riddance, saves the cops a job. But when you spray a street with weapons like machine guns the public takes the position that their lives are endangered, that innocent bystanders will get hit along with the guys marked for the hit. You understand now?"

"There wasn't an innocent bystander in sight! Nitti said heatedly. "I'm not that crazy that I'm going to take a chance on hitting some citizen."

Torrio and Capone exchanged glances, the silent words that two men understand each other can speak with their eyes.

Capone said, "Okay, Frank. We'll drop it. From now on, however, if you have any ideas of putting in any new systems, you talk it over first with Johnny and me. One more thing

— get those machine guns out of the Four Deuces and stash them in the back room of Mike's Saloon. He already knows about it."

Torrio said, "Did you have to use Campagna as the driver? I got a call from Bobo this morning. The story of the killings hit the New York papers. He didn't like the idea of Campagna being used as he was. He feels Louis is much more valuable a man than to risk in this kind of caper. Don't do it again. That's all, Frank."

FRANK NITTI walked out of the room, smoldering. In the back of his mind there was born the thought that sooner or later he would, in one fashion or another, even up this episode. He was to do just that. And it cost him his life.

Things remained quiet for about two weeks except for the fact that Bill Drury, the honest cop, raided the Four Deuces without a search warrant, arrested several of the men who were there when he found them carrying pistols and hauled them downtown to the 11th Street Station. He didn't find the machine guns as he had hoped to.

Torrio bailed out the five men within hours and knew that this was only the beginning of the trouble he could expect from Drury. There was no use trying to buy him off. Drury would spit in anyone's face who tried it then knock him down and arrest him for attempted bribery. Torrio decided to talk to some of his friends



FRANK NITTI

downtown in an effort to take the heat off the mob.

Two days after Drury's raid on the Four Deuces, Hymie Weiss, O'Bannion's chief lieutenant, Frank and Pete Gusenberg, two of Bugs Moran's killers, raided a Torrio-Capone warehouse, smashed equipment, hundreds of barrels of beer, and killed two minor hoods named Eddie White and Vito Cannelli. The two men were hit with about thirty machine gun slugs.

This was O'Bannion's and Moran's answer to Torrio and Capone.

Nitti was called up to Capone's suite of rooms, where he found Torrio, Capone, and McGurn. McGurn, dapper, not yet twenty-five, sat calmly in a chair, his legs crossed and smoking a cigarette.

"Sit down, Frank," Capone invited. "Make yourself at ease. This may take a long time."

Nitti sat down in a chair opposite McGurn. Torrio sat next to Capone beside the large mahogany desk. Capone came right to the point.

"Frank, you and Jack started something. Now it looks like you're going to have to finish it. You know that Cannelli and White were hit with machine guns. Johnny told you that this was going to happen, that O'Bannion and Moran would get choppers and use them against us. Well, it's happened. We invited it. It's our party so we have to attend to it. You're going to find Hymie Weiss a tough nut to crack. The same with Frank and Pete Gušenberg. They're as watchful as a tiger guarding its cubs.

"Johnny and me, we ain't too much interested in hitting Weiss or the Gusenbergs. Right now, that is: What we want to stop is having those guys bust up our equipment. Besides the dollar losses there is the setting up of new equipment. It takes time, sometimes a month. That hurts our business. We have to keep supplying our customers. That's your problem, Frank. Yours and Jack's. It's your party."

Nitti was thoughtful for a long minute. No one spoke. Torrio studied him closely. McGurn kept on smoking, his face impassive, looking at no one in particular. Capone smoked his cigar reflectively and leaned back in his chair. Nitti finally spoke.

"The first thing I want to do is heist some Moran and O'Bannion beer trucks," Nitti said. "I want to move the trucks to one of our plants, repaint the trucks and use them as ours. We'll use their beer to supply our customers. I figure that's a fair exchange."

"Okay," Capone replied quietly, "but from that point on you are going to have to send two cars full of men along with every one of our trucks, because Weiss will do the same thing to us. That means more men, more cars, more money."

"Then they'll have to do the same thing," Nitti replied. "It may bring peace. Moran is money hungry. He's got a big payroll, almost as big as ours, I think, and not one-fourth of the business we do. He'll come to terms."

"O'Bannion won't let him," Torrio said. "O'Bannion has a peculiar hatred for Al and me. He would rather go broke than give in to us. He's a stupid Mick in that respect but that's how he is and he won't change. Moran does everything. O'Bannion says because O'Bannion has a lot of the boys downtown in his pockets. He's Moran's protection. Your idea won't work, Frank."

"I'd like to try it."

"There will be more killings," Torrio said. "It will be on both sides. What can happen is that we'll kill each other off and guys like Runt Quinlan, Frankie Lake and Terry Druggan will move in, not to mention the South Side O'Donnells."

"I think you're wrong," Nitti said. "The Runt wouldn't move out of The Valley."

The Valley of those days was a low, level stretch west of the Chicago River, held in sinister isolation by Canal, Halstead, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth streets. It was a dreary land of decrepit warehouses ramshackle, weatherbeaten shanties, old tenements, stores, and saloons, reeking with odors and, on its river side, criss-crossed by innumerable railroad tracks.

Every kind of hood and criminal found hiding places in The Valley's warrens. Cops had been murdered there and the stranger who wandered across its lawless frontier with money in his pockets was lucky to escape with his life. When Nitti mentioned The Valley it set Torrio to thinking. The Valley would be a good jumping off place for a takeover of Cicero.

Torrio decided to talk it over later with Al Capone. The Runt would be no problem. He could either be taken out of the picture or into the organization, whichever was the more feasible. This time, however, he vetoed Nitti.

"Frank, what difference would it make who took over our business if we were gone? What we want to do is to stop anyone from breaking up our plants and shooting our men. Also, we want to avoid open gang war. That would bring the heat of hell down on us."

In one of his rare occasions of disagreement with Torrio, Capone now

sided with Nitti. He said, "I think we should let Frank go along with his plan. It's the only way right now. If we allow Weiss to think we are backing off he'll only get a lot bolder and break up every one of our plants."

There was a long silence in the room and then Torrio nodded. "Okay, Al, just as you say. Let's give it a try. But no pistol play if you can avoid it."

That was all Nitti wanted to hear. "*If you can avoid it.*" He would have a dozen reasons why he couldn't avoid it. All he wanted was a clear shot at Weiss and the Gusenbergs.

"Jack in with me on this?" Nitti asked.

"Sure thing," Capone replied. "You two work together."

McGurn grinned. This was right up his alley. He had come to love the machine gun. Its quick action, inexorable dealing of death, its terrible power was the anathema to his enemies and a sweet lover to him.

The raids on O'Bannion and Moran beer trucks began, and with them a wave of killings on both sides. Fifty-eight men were murdered in the next year, about a score of them at the hands of Nitti. McGurn matched him killing for killing and added a few extra on his own.

Through all the terrible, merciless and seeming endless slaughter only one thing was paramount in Nitti's mind — how to take over the mob from Capone. The thought that he was harboring a doubles-cross, a deadly

violation of gangland's code, didn't bother him nor enter his mind.

There was nothing complex or subtle in his thinking. Rather, it was based on the raw law of the jungle. Honor was unknown to him. Allegiance was a foreign term. If Capone didn't see through him then Torrio did. The shrewd mind of this master of organization in criminality appraised Nitti accurately. He spoke of it to Capone.

The two men were alone in Capone's suite in the Lexington Hotel. Torrio spoke earnestly and with great concern because what he was suggesting was the elimination of Nitti, not in exact terms but suggestively.

Capone chewed on his cigar thoughtfully, leaned back in his chair behind the huge desk and regarded Torrio curiously.

"I don't know how you figure Nitti at all, Johnny," Capone said. "What I mean is, that I don't understand what you base your opinions on. What has Nitti done that gives you the kind of thinking you're giving me? Can you name one specific thing he's done, one wrong thing, against me or you?"

Torrio moved forward in his chair, made a tent of his fingers in a sort of prayerful gesture and closed his eyes for several moments before he spoke.

"Nothing, Al. He's done nothing I can put my finger on. But there's his attitude toward you and me, the way he argues everything, up to a point, you understand, as if he were

telling you and me that we didn't know what we were talking about or what we were doing. It's only when you or I make it known that we want it done just the way we are ordering it that he submits to our way."

"That doesn't prove a thing, Johnny. How the hell is he going to move into my slot or yours? He'd have to kill both of us. If he does, how is he going to do it? And when he does, how is he going to handle guys like McGurn, who is loyal, or Paul Ricca, who is just as loyal, or any of the other boys? They'd gun him down, slice him into hamburger and bury him in the Chicago River. What you're saying doesn't make sense to me."

Capone rose from his chair and moved toward Torrio, laid his hand on the gang leader's shoulder. "Throw it out of your mind, Johnny. Nitti is a good man. He's the front man of our organization in keeping the opposition in line. They fear him. They know that anything they may do against us means Nitti's retaliation. We need him."

Torrio let out a small sigh and rose from his chair. "I hope you're right. I suggest you keep a closer eye on him, keep him in line more. Okay?"

"Okay, Johnny, if it'll make you feel better."

THE ODD THING about Torrio's suspicions was that other men in the organization felt the same way about Nitti. Among them were Ricca, Mur-

ray Humphreys, an intelligent hood with a college background, Eddie Vogel, and Ralph Pierce.

They spoke to Al Capone about it. What they said disturbed Capone. As a result, he spoke to some of the lesser men in the organization, men who worked with Nitti in his duties as enforcer — Sam Battaglia, Marshall Caifano, Sam Giancana and Chuck English.

Each man said almost the same thing, that Nitti gave orders as if he were the top man and that what he said was it. Men like Battaglia, Caifano, English and Willie "Potatoes" Daddano were probably the trigger happiest troupe that Chicago had seen in a long time. They were tougher than Nitti in many ways and they didn't like the way he gave his orders.

Capone feared that Nitti's attitude would result, sooner or later, in a blood bath, with the gang riddling itself to pieces. Capone had seen the top position in gangdom change hands several times, not only in Chicago but in New York when he was a member of the notorious Five Points mob.

He spoke harshly to each man with whom he talked, assuring them that Nitti was only following his orders, which meant they were to obey them without question. He next had a talk with Nitti. He called him into his suite one afternoon, greeted him coldly.

"Sit down, Frank. I want to have a serious talk with you."



JOHNNY TORRIO

"You got a beef, Al?" Nitti's tone was a little belligerent.

"You damned right I've got a beef. First of all, take that goddam tone of yours outta your voice. That's your trouble. A lot of the boys don't like the way you give orders. They don't like that way you talk to them. This is a tight organization. We depend on these men to do the job they're doing, and so far they're doing a damned good job. Each man is important in the job he's in."

"You can't buy loyalty, Frank. You have to earn it, and you earn it by being loyal, by treating your men with respect. You got that?" He slapped his huge fist on the desk. "It seems to me that you haven't learned that yet and it's about time you did."

"Who's making the beefs? You know who you're talking about? You're talking about a bunch of trigger happy goons who have to be kept in line, the way I keep them in line, or they'll try to take over. And you know who I mean."

"Like hell! The word is going around that you're the guy who's trying to take over." Capone stared at Nitti for a long moment.

"Who says so? You bring the guy or guys that say that in here and let them tell me that to my face. I've got that coming to me. When you say that someone is saying about me the things you have told me then I've got a right to be faced with them. You believe it or you wouldn't be telling me about it. What the hell can you say that I've done that should give you that idea? You name one thing I've done!"

"You haven't done a thing. It's your attitude. It's the way you do things that spells out their opinions. Me, boss. Me, Nitti. What I say goes." Capone thumped the desk again. "You Nitti, the guy that passes along the orders I give you. That's the way I want it. You've lost the respect of every man who works with you. It's going to take you a long time winning it back. Work on it."

Nitti was seething inside of himself. He wondered how he could walk away from this session without latsing injury to his pride. He hated Capone more at this moment than he had ever hated him before. He was boxed in and felt it. He had to fol-

low orders. This was the kind of organization that either kept you in or put you out — dead. There was no inbetween.

He thought quickly, a little in a sound self-appraisal of himself. He was eager, hungry for wealth and power, yet snarling under the leadership of two men he felt were his inferiors. He would bide his time. He would agree to what Al Capone said but he just couldn't take the whole thing lying down. He had to assert himself.

"Al, I've done everything you've ordered me to do. I've done it to your satisfaction. I took care of the O'Donnells, straightened out Gruggan and Lake, kept Aiello plugged up in his hole, and put the fear of God into Weiss, especially after the O'Bannion killing. What the hell more do you want me to do to prove myself to you?"

Al Capone exploded, "I'm talking about meat and you're talking about beans. I've told you that you are creating unrest among a lot of the boys. They follow your orders not because you give them but because they feel I gave them, or Johnny gave them. They're not loyal to you but to Johnny and me! Do you understand that?"

Capone pounded the table several times. "I want you to think about something, very carefully. Unless you straighten up in handling these guys one of the days when you're out on a hit one of them will fill you full of lead and say you were knocked off

by one of the guys you were after. It can easily happen. Think about it.

"If it should happen, do you think for one single moment that I would question it? How the hell could I? Even if I knew, I couldn't question it. You understand now?"

Nitti rose from his chair, jammed his hands into his pants pockets and looked Al Capone squarely in the face. "Okay," he said soberly, "I'll give them the friendly, palsy-walsy treatment from now on. I'll play it your way. Good enough?"

"Good enough. That's all, Frank." Capone hesitated a moment then said, "I'm sorry I had to lay it out this way but I felt it was the only way to make you see it our way. Just forget how I said it, but not what I said."

"Okay, Al. Thanks."

When Nitti left Capone he tried to think of who it was that had made the beef to Capone. He went over in his mind that moment when Dion O'Bannion was knocked off. He had set it up. The kiss of death and murder. Anselmi? Scalisi? McGurn? He eliminated Jack McGurn. Jack didn't give a damn who gave the orders. He followed them. His ambition had been realized. He was a member of the team of executioners, valued, important in his way, highly paid.

That left Anselmi and Scalisi. He was wrong there too. Neither of these two had beefed to Capone. They were working on plans of their own to take over the mob and had no time for Nitti whom they regarded

as a big mouth. Scalisi and Anselmi were Sicilians who had been with the Mafia in their native country. They were vicious, conscienceless gunmen who killed with abandon and joy.

They would as soon shoot a man down in the middle of a street in broad daylight with hundreds of onlookers as they would in a planned setup in the dead of night in a lonely alley. They were inseparable. Hurt one and you had to watch the other.

The mob took over Cicero, a suburb of Chicago, elected their candidate for mayor, Joseph Z. Klenha, in one of the bloodiest battles ever waged for the control of an election.

On April 1, 1924, Capone terrorized the town with a group of his gunmen, all of them directed by Nitti. Policeman Anton Bican was black-jacked. Voters who refused to co-operate were dealt with violently. Joseph Rice's throat was slashed. John Gairus and Roman Delcewicz were shot. A man was killed in Eddie Tanci's saloon. The mob kidnaped judges and clerks of election and held them prisoners in a garage across the line in Chicago until the polls closed.

Late in the day a riot call was turned in, and one hundred Chicago policemen, sworn in as county deputies by Judge Edmund K. Jarecki, who rushed to Cicero. This was the first time Chicago policemen had been called for duty outside the city limits since 1870.

On the other side of the ledger,

Frank Capone, Al's brother, was shot and killed. Mayor Klenha's Democratic ticket, backed by Capone, swept into office by an overwhelming majority.

Hymie Weiss seethed. Bugs Moran burned. Joe Aiello fumed. They held a council of war. Capone and Nitti had to be stopped. But first, Torrio.

On January 24, 1925, in the wan-ing light of the cold day, Torrio and his wife stopped in front of their apartment house at 7011 Clyde Avenue. Mrs. Torrio stepped out of the car and headed for the door of the apartment building. Johnny Torrio lingered to remove several packages from the car. Three men rushed from across the street, and as they drew near to where Torrio stood they opened fire.

The volley shattered the wind-shield of the car and wounded Robert Barton, Torrio's chauffeur. Torrio dropped the packages he was holding and ran for the shelter of the building. The gunmen fired at Torrio, struck him several times and Johnny Torrio fell to the sidewalk. As he fell, one of the gunmen fired several more shots at his prostrate form. The killers ran back across the street, leaped into a car and sped away.

Torrio was hurried to the Jackson Park Hospital. He had been shot five times. His jaw had been broken, his arm punctured, and two wounds in the chest and one in the abdomen were thought to be serious. It was

suspected that the slugs had been poisoned, rubbed with garlic.

Torrio's life hung by a hair for ten days. Then he rallied and, to the surprise of his doctor, recovered. The police brought suspects to his bedside to be identified, but Torrio halted this program.

"No use bringing anyone else in here," he said. "I won't rap any of them. I wouldn't lay a finger even on the guilty man. I know the men who shot me."

Capone spoke with Torrio.

"Who were they, Johnny?"

"Hymie Weiss, Bugs Moran, and Frank Gusenberg. Get them, Al. Take care of them."

"I will. Don't worry about it. They're living on borrowed time right now. What else can I do for you?"

"Bring in our lawyer. I want to settle things. With you. I'm moving out, Al. It's all yours. All you have to do is buy me out, on the physical inventory only."

Al Capone was elated. So was Frank Nitti. Weiss, Moran, and Gusenberg had done him a big favor by taking Torrio out of the picture. All that remained now was to get rid of Capone and Nitti would take over. Torrio left Chicago under a heavy guard of hoods, took a train to New York and from there a ship to Italy where he remained for years.

AFTER TORRIO left town, Capone called in Nitti.

"Frank," Capone said, "set up Weiss. As soon as you can. And



JACK MCGURN

Gusenberg too. We'll get to Moran a little later. He's no problem."

Nitti grinned. "Sure thing, Al. Start shopping for flowers. These babies are gone."

On October 11, 1926, Weiss' car pulled up in front of the flower shop at 738 North State Street, where Dion O'Bannion had been slain. In a house next door, at 740 State Street, was a three-story rooming house kept by Mrs. Anna Rotarui. In a room on the third floor facing State Street were Frank Nitti and Jack McGurn, each armed with a machine gun.

Both men had kept a vigilant watch for a week. At No. 1 Superior

Street, about fifty feet west of State Street, from a second floor window, Albert Anselmi and Frank Scalisi commanded a view of the front of the flower shop. Each man also was armed with a Thompson machine gun.

Five men got out of a car when it stopped in front of the flower shop. First came Weiss; then his body-guard, Pat Murray; W. W. O'Brien, an attorney; Ben Jacobs, an investigator in O'Brien's employ, and then Sam Peller, Weiss' driver.

Weiss had almost reached the door of the flower shop when Nitti, McGurn, Anselmi and Scalisi opened fire. The windows of both houses were ablaze with blinding splashes and streams of fire. The drowsy stillness of the street, bathed in dusky coolness by the long shadows of the later afternoon, was broken by a throbbing, ear-splitting clatter. Bullets, sizzling through the air with a noise like the swish of wind-driven hail, were splintering stone fragments from the corner of the Holy Name Cathedral across the street from the flower shop and cutting slits in the smooth cement slabs of the sidewalk.

Weiss was killed instantly by a dozen slugs, six of which passed through him. Pat Murray was killed. He had taken fifteen bullets. O'Brien was struck in the arm, side, and abdomen. He collapsed in his tracks. Peller was shot in the groin and Jacobs in the leg.

They ran, as fast as their wounds

would permit, from the scene of the holocaust. The killers hurried from their rooms and disappeared even as squads of police gathered at the scene. The word went out in the underworld. Nitti and McGurn. Only those two could kill like that. The cops picked up both men, questioned them at length and got nowhere .

Captain Stege said, "You guys are about as rotten a pair of apples as I've seen in all my years as a cop. We can't touch you and you know it. But I want to tell you something. You're going to get it, just the way you've been giving to everybody else. It's in the cards for both of you. And when it happens I'm going to have a big laugh, eat a big dinner, drink a bottle of wine, and stand over your graves. Now, get the hell out of here. Your stink is smelling up this room!"

Nitti and McGurn returned to the Lexington Hotel to be greeted by Capone and several of the top echelon guys in the mob. There was a huge table in Capone's suite spread with gourmet foods of every description. Imported liquor and champagne, the real stuff, was in great abundance. It was a typical celebration Capone had staged many times before when members of the mob beat a rap. He handed Nitti and McGurn envelopes. Each contained ten one thousand dollar bills.

"A little appreciation," he said as he handed them the envelopes. "Take a week off and enjoy yourself. Go

outta town. Miami, New York. Whatever you like. But keep in touch."

McGurn thanked Capone but Nitti only nodded his thanks. Al Capone waved both gestures away with a deprecatory hand. Nitti's eyes narrowed for a brief instant. Capone missed it. Nothing Capone may have done for Nitti, at this time, or ever, would have meant a thing to Nitti. He nourished his plan to take over the mob. All he had to do was to get rid of Capone.

Nitti didn't know it but he was getting a lot of outside help, from a source he had never figured on. The Treasury Department, in the person of Eliot Ness, wanted to put him out of business and Frank J. Wilson, Chief of the United States Secret Service, who wanted to put him in jail. Through some manner, Frank Nitti learned that Ness was out to break up Capone's beer and liquor empire, raid his stills and warehouses. When he did learn it he set out to help Ness by making secret phone calls.

"Mr. Ness," Nitti said the first time he called, "don't ask any questions, just listen. On the top two floors in the 1800 block on Diversey Avenue, there's a big whisky still. The name on the building is the *Illinois Malleable Iron Company*. You take it from there."

"Don't you want to tell me your name?" Ness asked.

Nitti had already hung up.

Ness raided the plant. There was a giant still that turned out 20,000

gallons a day. It put a big hole in Capone's operation.

Al Capone fumed and raved. He had Nitti, McGurn and Murry Humphreys, and Paul Ricca in his suite.

"Who in hell could have tipped off that plant?" he shouted. "That bust has cost us a million dollars! I want the sonofabitch that did it. Frank, you and Jack dig into this. Find out what you can in any way that you can do it. Paul, you talk to some of our friends downtown and see if they have any information. Murray, you do the same. We have to stop this right now. Whoever tipped the feds must know a lot more about our business!"

He was never more right. Nitti knew a great deal about the mob's business. The next raid Ness made was also on a tip by Nitti. It was a large double garage at 2636 Calumet Avenue. Another raid was made on a farm near Dundee, Illinois. The huge barn contained a 750-gallon still, another 250-gallon still, 15 tanks of mash, 6,500 pounds of sugar and 820 gallons of finished alcohol. Ness and his men arrested the six men they found on the premises.

The raids continued, each one digging deeper and deeper into Capone's operations. This was only half of what Nitti wanted to accomplish. The main thing was to get rid of Capone. He made a call to Frank Wilson.

"Mr. Wilson, if you want some evidence that will help you put Ca-

pone in jail, pick up a couple of guys named Lou Shumway and Fred Ries. They're the bookkeepers who have charge of the books at *The Ship*. That's a gambling joint in Cicero. Good-by, Mr. Wilson."

Ricca and Humphreys got word to Capone that Wilson had been tipped off about Shumway and Ries. Ricca suggested that both men be hit.

"No," Capone argued. "They've been good men. They've done nothing. Give them some money and tell them to get out of town. In different directions. They're loyal. They won't talk."

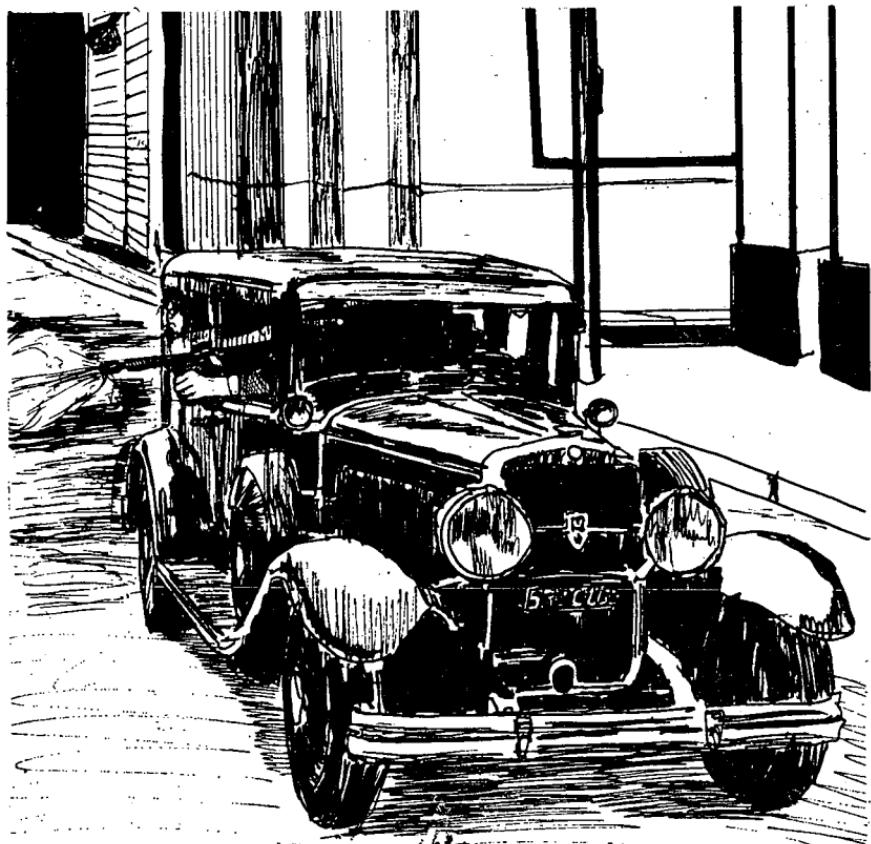
Humphreys disagreed. "They've never been under pressure, Al. You can't tell. Loyalty has a breaking point, especially with two guys who are on the legit side. Paul is right."

"No!" Capone shouted. "Get them outta town. Now. Right away. Call them. Tell them to go home and wait for you, and to take all the books with them. Get the books and bring them here."

Ricca called *The Ship* and spoke to Shumway and Ries. He relayed Capone's instructions. You got it, Lou? Okay. Do it. Right now."

Shumway took his family to Miami and Ries took his to St. Louis. In their hurry to leave *The Ship*, however, they overlooked two important ledgers dating back two years. Wilson and Nels Tessem, one of his top agents, together with a team of six other agents, raided *The Ship*.

They found the two ledgers after



an exhaustive search of the premises. Wilson was elated. He was to learn that his elation would turn into frustration that lasted for two years. Without Shumway and Ries the ledgers meant little.

Nitti again made a telephone call to Wilson. He gave him a description of both Shumway and Ries.

"That's fine," Wilson replied. "I appreciate your help very much, believe me. You're doing us a great

service, but where the hell are those two guys?"

"I don't know. I am sorry."

"Will you try to find out? Will you —" It was no use to go further. Nitti had hung up.

FRANK WILSON worked on the ledgers he found in *The Ship* with a team of handwriting experts. He spent months in fruitless investigation through banks, credit agencies, and

newspaper files. He prowled the streets of Cicero but could get no clue to show that a single dollar from the gambling joints, the brothels, or the bootleg warehouses had ever reached Capone's pockets.

Finally, after two years of painstaking search and investigation, he received the call he had been waiting for. Shumway was in Miami and Ries was in St. Louis. That was all he needed to know.

It took several months more but agents finally located both men, took them into custody and went to work on them. They were treated with the utmost care and courtesy. It was pointed out to them that they had everything to lose and nothing to gain. The heat was on Capone and that it was only a matter of time. If they cooperated they would save themselves from long prison terms. Both men finally broke and agreed to testify.

In the Autumn of 1931, Capone was formally charged with the crime of Income Tax Evasion and brought to trial before Judge James H. Wilkerson. United States Attorney George E. G. Johnson was assigned the task of prosecuting Capone.

Capone tried everything to stave off defeat, to keep from going to prison. He bribed ten members of the jury with huge sums, promised to pay off mortgages, put children of members of the jury through college, buy them automobiles. He spread money around as if it were going out of style.

Word got to Judge Wilkerson. He waited until the day of the trial; then he told his clerk, "Judge Edwards has another trial commencing today. Bring me his entire panel and take my panel to Judge Edwards."

It was a serious blow to Capone. His lawyers now began to maneuver for a settlement and make an offer to the effect that Capone would settle the government's claim against him for four million dollars for a token prison sentence. Judge Wilkerson refused to accept the settlement.

"There can be no bargains in a federal court," Judge Wilkerson said. "I will hear the evidence in this case and rule accordingly."

Ries and Shumway testified, admitted to all the entries in the ledgers seized by Wilson, and to other facts, that hundreds of thousands of dollars had passed from them into the hands of Capone. The total was staggering.

After a lengthy trial, Capone was convicted. His lawyers immediately filed an appeal and bail was set at \$50,000 which Capone put up. The appeal was turned down and Judge Wilkerson sentenced Capone to eleven years in prison and fined him \$50,000.

Nitti immediately began his take-over of the mob. He did it smoothly and with threats and several assassinations but he did it. He ruled the mob for all the years that Capone was in jail. Capone did hard time. He first went to Leavenworth and then was transferred to Alcatraz,

where the routine was severe enough to break the heart and soul of the strongest man.

Capone began to have severe headaches. What he didn't know was that he was suffering from paresis, the deadly disease resulting from syphilis. He did the full measure of his sentence and when he was released Nitti saw to it that he served another year in the Cook County jail in Chicago on another rap.

In New York, Gaetano Ricci was not idle. He had sent several of his most trusted men to Chicago to look into the background of the raids and arrest of his friend Capone. He got the answer he wanted. He called Chicago and told a trusted member of the mob to keep an eye on Nitti.

"Topo!" He exploded. "Rat!"

The word went out, secretly, to tight-mouthed men. To Tony Accardo, to the Fischettis, cousins of Capone, to Paul Ricca, and then Gaetano Ricci, alias Bobo Goebels came to Chicago.

On this day in 1943, Gaetano Ricci came into Chicago, called on several members of the mob and thereafter went with them to the home of Frank Nitti. He didn't mince any words.

"Nitti, you are a rat. I have all the information I need about you. You ratted to Wilson and Ness. You tipped them about all the plants and about the two bookkeepers who testified against Al. You are finished. I'm going to give you a break."

Ricci handed Nitti a gun. "There's

one bullet in that gun, in firing position. The boys are going with you to a nice quiet place, and there you are going to put that gun to your head and pull the trigger. If you don't we will do it our way. We will shoot you a hundred times and put a nickel in your hand, the mark of the rat. How do you want it?"

Nitti's heart dissolved to water as he stood there and stared at the men around him, at the room in which he stood, the house that had cost him a fortune, a fortune he had earned by the double-cross. He trembled. His eyes pleaded for mercy but saw none in the faces of the men around him. There was to be no reprieve. This was the end.

"I'd like to say good-bye to my wife," he said in a voice shaking with emotion.

"No," Ricci retorted. "No goodbyes. Let's go."

They hurried him out the door, put him in a car, a car preceded the car in which he was placed, and one followed. He was driven to a lonely spot along a railroad track and shoved out of the car. The other men in the cars got out too. They waited while Nitti stood there with the gun in his hand. He turned to Ricci.

"Gaetano —"

"No!" Gaetano replied. "No! Now!"

Frank Nitti looked up at the sky, then all around him, put the gun to his temple, hesitated a moment, then pulled the trigger.

HARRY SPENCER stepped away from the speakers' lecturn and stood where his audience could see him at full length. His appearance was as much a guide for the assembled would-be investigators as the lecture he was giving.

Spencer was of average height, average weight, and had average coloring and features. He was in his mid-fifties and wore medium-priced

THE EXPERT

*He knew every road on the street
of Evil — except the road back.*

by A. F. ORESHNIK



clothes of modest design. The colors he had chosen were all neutral and quite drab, with the result that even on the platform he tended to blend into the background.

The only things about Harry Spencer that weren't average and unimpressive were his conceit and the exaggerated gestures he used to emphasize his points.

"Surveillance techniques," he was saying with waving arms, "should be perfected beyond the basic outline found in your manuals. For instance, the books tell you never to let a subject catch your eye because if he does he'll remember you the next time he sees you. And they say that a minimum of three men are needed for effective tailing, one to precede the subject or remain parallel with him on the opposite side of the street; one to follow the subject at a discreet distance; and one to follow the follower.

"The three can exchange positions frequently and avoid detection while taking no chance of losing sight of the subject. All this is fine as far as it goes, but in the field you'll have to be ready for situations more complex than merely following a subject down a street."

Spencer allowed his gaze to pass over the hundred and fifty faces before him, then he continued: "It's not unusual for a subject to enter a building or board an elevator. When this happens you have to be ready to act without hesitation. Of all the things you might possibly do,

you must quickly choose the one correct move. The way you learn to handle unusual situations is through practice. Anytime you have a few minutes to spare, team up with a couple of friends and practice tailing. Before long you'll be prepared for anything a subject might do."

He paused and held his arms out to the audience with his palms up. "Now, are there any questions?"

"Mr. Spencer?" a voice ventured from the rear of the room. Its owner was a freckle-faced young man with a large Adam's apple that bobbed when he spoke. He had bright-red, bushy hair and there was a wide gap between his front teeth. He made Spencer think immediately of a squirrel or chipmunk. "What would you do if a subject got on an elevator, Mr. Spencer?"

Spencer folded his arm in front of his chest and pursed his lips thoughtfully for effect. The question had been predictable. Harry Spencer had been a detective and student of human nature for over thirty years. Life held few surprises for him. Even his dual role of teacher and consultant to several large investigative agencies had ceased to be a challenge for him. Since his retirement from the U. S. Customs Agency Service, the detective section of customs, everything had been too easy.

"Well," Spencer answered, "there may be too many exits for only three men to cover effectively, and waiting for the subject to come out

won't tell you where he's been or what he's been doing. I would follow him into the elevator car. If I heard him give his floor, I'd ask for the same one. Otherwise, I'd remain silent or ask for the top floor. In any case, I'd follow him when he left the car."

Spencer smiled broadly and pounded his right fist into his left palm. Both the gesture and smile were false. He had no interest in what he was saying, nor did lecturing give him pleasure.

"But here is where you must have know-how," he said. "I would be separated from my two partners, and I would have to let them know where I was somehow so they could join me. Therefore, as I left the elevator, I'd ask the operator if there was a Mr. Rumplemeyer on that floor. We always asked for Mr. Rumplemeyer in the customs service, but any name will do so long as it's unusual enough to be remembered.

"Later, when my partners ask if anyone has inquired for a Mr. Rumplemeyer, the operator is almost certain to remember both the incident and the floor where I left the elevator."

There was a flurry of appreciative applause. Spencer waited for it to subside, then turned back to his questioner. "Of course, as far as you are concerned, all this is purely academic. Your appearance is far too unusual for field work. Any agency, whether private or governmental,



would surely mark your file 'Office Assignments Only.'"

The young man's face colored and his Adam's apple bobbed rapidly a few times like a yoyo on a string; but he didn't reply. There were a few snickers at his embarrassment, causing his blush to deepen. Harry Spencer's lip parted in the first genuine smile of the morning. He had little patience for fools and enjoyed unmasking them.

A bell sounded, indicating the end of the class, and Spencer stepped down from the platform and joined the rush of students at the exit. For years he had been certain he was the world's most talented detective. Long before he retired and began teaching and acting as a consultant he'd known he was the best.

But the months since his retirement had not been as satisfying as he had thought they would be, and so he had just delivered his last lecture.

When he had retired from the United States customs, Harry Spencer had thought he had found the perfect way to fill his days. It was

only a short while, however, before he realized that talking about detection and giving advice weren't as intellectually gratifying and rewarding as matching wits in personal encounters.

He had never married — his job had been his whole life — and he was still as physically fit as many men half his age, so it didn't make sense to him that he should step aside for younger men. He was sorry he had decided to retire.

Also, besides his expertise as an investigator, Harry Spencer was certain he knew as much about the mechanics and economics of smuggling as any man alive. It seemed only proper that he should put this knowledge to use. Now, leaving the detective school for the last time, he looked forward to a life of travel and adventure. The role of detective had always been pleasing, but how much more satisfying it would be to travel the world, outwitting the customs bureaus at each country he visited.

For his first venture he chose to carry undeclared gold bars past the Indian customs. In India, he knew, the status of a Hindu family is measured by the size of the *stridhana*, the dowry of near-pure, twenty-two carat gold jewelry, a bride brings to her wedding.

But importation of gold has been forbidden since 1947, and the demand has caused the black market price of gold to rise far above that of the uncontrolled countries. It

seemed a perfect way for Harry Spencer to double any investment he cared to make.

Though tourists and others visiting foreign countries are never subjected to a search of their persons unless there is some strong reason to suspect them of something, Harry chose to be extra cautious. He didn't want even mild suspicion turned on him if he could avoid it, so he arranged to purchase gold without having tell-tale entry or exit stamps from major gold markets like Geneva or Hong Kong on his passport.

His method was as smart as it was simple. He got in touch with one of the smuggling syndicates he had locked horns with in the past and contracted to purchase twenty one-kilo bars of gold. Since the syndicate's risk was minimal, he was able to arrange a price only slightly above the world market.

He met the gold courier in the transient lounge at London Airport. This no-man's-land between aircraft and customs was the ideal place to transfer the gold. The courier could then continue his journey to New York before turning around and returning to Zurich, and Spencer could take the next KLM flight to Bombay. Neither of them had to run the gauntlet of British customs.

So, in the men's room adjoining the lounge, Harry Spencer exchanged more than thirty-five thousand dollars, the bulk of his savings, for a thin nylon vest stuffed with over forty pounds of gold. Then he wait-

ed patiently for his flight to be called and made his way carefully to the plane.

To walk in a natural manner took a feat of enormous strength and self-control. Forty pounds isn't a great weight to carry for a few minutes, but strapped to the body for hours it becomes a burden. Even sitting down Spencer was unable to relax, and when he got to his feet he had to do it without appearing to strain.

But Harry Spencer accomplished these things without incident. He was certain no one had seen the gold transfer in the rest room, and he was just as positive he had done nothing to make anyone suspect he was a smuggler.

Everything progressed perfectly until he arrived in Bombay. Then, as he stepped from the plane to the Tarmac, he was seized by customs police and searched thoroughly.

The gold was confiscated and Spencer received a six-month jail sentence. It didn't take him long to figure out that he must have been informed upon by the people who had sold him the gold. Apparently, any honor among smugglers didn't extend to a former customs man trying his hand at smuggling for the first time. Especially so when that customs man had cost the smuggling syndicate some members in the past.

Spencer had seen his mistake as soon as he was arrested. A full ninety percent of his own arrests had been made on the basis of information from informers. He knew he

should have guarded against that danger. It was an expensive and painful lesson, and he vowed never to make that mistake again.

When he had completed his sentence and was expelled from India, Spencer went directly to Switzerland. He wired his bank in New York for funds, then strapped on another smuggling vest, this one packed with over fifteen hundred expensive watch movements, and boarded a plane for the United States.

He didn't expect to realize the profit the gold would have brought; however, the customs duty he planned to avoid would be almost half the value of the movements. He did stand to make a fair return on his investment.

But profit wasn't his main reason for returning to crime so quickly. The six months spent in the Indian jail, living under sub-human conditions, had frightened him terribly and left him shaken. He saw himself as an acrobat who had fallen. He had to try the stunt again, attempt to smuggle something somewhere, or he would lose his nerve for good.

The squeal of the plane's tires when it landed at La Guardia sent a thrill through him. He didn't know whether it was caused by anxiety over the risk he was taking, or happiness at being back in the United States again after his ordeal in India. He decided it was probably caused by a combination of both.

Like every criminal, and smugglers especially, Harry Spencer knew that his own fear was one of his greatest dangers. Consequently, he made every effort to control his fear so that no one would wonder what caused it and investigate further.

Spencer concealed his apprehension beautifully as he approached the customs counter, but he didn't even think of trying to hide his pleasure.

While the customs inspector was glancing at his luggage, preparing to chalk a mark of approval, Harry Spencer saw a familiar face. Standing to one side, surveying the lines of people going through customs, was a freckle-faced, red-headed youth with a prominent Adam's apple. Spencer felt a flood of happiness at being home and at seeing someone he recognized after all he'd been through. Without thinking, he raised his arm and waved.

As soon as he had waved once, he realized how foolish it was and pulled his arm down. Unfortunately, the redhead had seen him and came strolling over. He was wearing a brand-new inspector's uniform and Spencer suddenly remembered him as the would-be detective he had humiliated at his last lecture.

"I see you're with customs now," Spencer said cordially. "How do you like it, Mr. . . .?"

"Maxwell," the redhead offered. "Gus Maxwell. I like it fine. It's interesting work." He had a quizzical smile on his lips, revealing the wide

gap between his front teeth. "I see you've been on a trip."

His eyes took in the customs agent with his chalk poised over Spencer's bags and the passport Spencer held ready in his hand.

Spencer saw that Maxwell's looks were deceptive.

"Yes," Spencer said. "I thought I'd see a little of the world, but I must admit it's good to be home."

Maxwell nodded and casually positioned himself so that he stood beside Spencer, rather than facing him directly.

"Yes, I guess it's always nice to come home," he agreed, and placed an arm across Spencer's shoulders in a friendly manner.

Spencer turned his head to look at him. Maxwell still smiled, but it had an appraising quality to it now, and his eyes had narrowed. Spencer nearly cringed. He knew that "friendly" gesture well. He had used it himself hundreds of times when he had wanted to give some suspect a cursory frisk without offending him if he was wrong. Too late he remembered that anyone who seems exceptionally jocular or gay as they pass through customs is automatically suspect.

"Well, I hope you had a good time," Maxwell said, taking his arm from Spencer's shoulders and letting his hand run down to the small of Spencers' back in a perfectly natural way.

Spencer's smuggler's vest had been designed to take advantage of

the hollow at the small of his back. Maxwell's fingers contacted the strange bulge and his smile widened.

"I may be funny looking," he said, "but I always thought you were a bit of a fool. Thanks for proving it."

Under Section 545 of Title 18 of the United States Code, Spencer could have received as much as five years in prison and a ten thousand dollar fine. As it was, he pleaded guilty, threw himself on the mercy of the court, and was given a three-year sentence. At best, he might be paroled in a year; at worst, with time off for good behavior he would serve little more than two.

Happily for Harry Spencer, American prisons aren't as bad as the jails in India. He was sent to the federal penitentiary at Danbury, Connecticut. There, he was given a bunk in a spotless dormitory and assigned to work in the prison's kitchen. He received three meals a day, clean sheets every week, and hated every minute of it.

Spencer had never thought of prison as a place where men were reformed. During his years as a customs detective he had arrested some men several times, proving to him that prison neither reformed nor deterred. Instead, he had pictured prison as a place where petty criminals were taught to commit more serious offenses like burglary and bank robbery. He soon found that this wasn't so, either. He could see no one who appeared qualified to



teach criminal techniques. No one, that is, except himself.

So he taught anyone who wanted to learn. He showed them the best designs for smuggler's vests; he told them they could detect a fake rough diamond by rubbing it between forefinger and thumb — a real diamond seems slightly oily, while a piece of milk bottle doesn't. He pointed out that genuine documents often have typing errors and spelling mistakes, and that immaculate papers are always checked carefully; and he listed all the cars and trucks, like the '59 Thunderbird and the Ford Ranchero, that have ideal factory-built hiding places for contraband.

To his surprise he found that his lecture on tailing and shadowing was as popular in prison as it had

been outside. He hadn't thought any criminal actually believed a police agency would attempt to follow a man as crudely as it is usually portrayed in the movies and on TV, but most of his fellow prisoners did.

"It takes at least three cars, each with two men in it," he explained many times. "The cars are in radio contact with one another and only one is in sight of the car being followed. They keep switching around, first one in contact, and then the other. Sometimes the 'follow' from the front, watching the suspect's directional signals for the signs of where to turn. When it's done right, a man can be tailed for weeks and never know it."

Most of the men had never realized they might be followed by three or more cars, or that it could actually be a car in front that was "following" them, but they were surprised by others things, too.

"If the man being followed gets out of his car or taxi and starts walking, one man get out of each of the pursuing cars and joins him on the sidewalk. Now, since they don't have radios to keep in contact with one another, each one keeps one of the others in sight. The thing to remember is that if you're being followed, the men will try to avoid direct eye contact. They know it will make you remember them.

"So, if you think someone is following you, go up to him and ask a question. If he doesn't want you to know he's following you, he'll

stop doing it and you may be able to lose his friends, too."

Spencer enjoyed playing Fagin to the other men's Olivier Twist, but he doubted any of them would ever use his lessons constructively. They were all failures and it was unlikely they would ever be anything else. But as he thought about the shortcomings of his fellow prisoners, Spencer couldn't escape the fact that he wasn't any better than they were. His only two ventures into crime had been fiascos, despite all his specialized knowledge. Instead of multiplying his savings, he had lost everything except a few hundred dollars.

It was all too apparent that the years he had spent hunting smugglers had not prepared him to become one. Instead of a life of adventure as he watched his savings grow, he had found only dismal prisons, and his funds had disappeared before his eyes.

Now he gave up the dream of ever becoming a wealthy international smuggler and replaced it with the hope that he could find a way to get back what he had lost. If he could somehow regain his lost savings, he could still look forward to a comfortable old age.

The trouble was, he knew that quick money is never easy money and seldom legal money. All his careful reasoning and clear thinking had convinced him he was a failure as a criminal and should never have tried to be one, then that same

reasoning led him to the conclusion that a crime of some kind was the only thing that could return his savings to him.

But what kind of crime? He was a failure as a smuggler and that was the only criminal activity he really knew well. How could he turn his knowledge into money other than as a smuggler? The answer was so obvious he almost missed it — he would regain his savings in the same way he had earned them in the first place, as a detective.

So, instead of giving lectures to other prisoners, he finished the remainder of his sentence locked in thought. He got many ideas, examined them carefully and finally rejected them, before he found one that seemed plausible. As always, once he settled on the plan of action he wondered why he hadn't thought of it right away. The fact that his reasoning had often proved specious in the past was something he chose to ignore.

When Harry Spencer was released from prison, he returned to New York and found a room in a small hotel. His new quarters were neither as clean nor as modern as the ones he had just left, but they were inexpensive. For the time being, at least, price would be the deciding factor when it came to any choice. As far as the room went, however, it wasn't important because he knew he wouldn't be spending much time there.

The next few days he divided his

time between the international arrival areas at Kennedy and La Guardia airports. Finally, he decided to concentrate his attention on Kennedy, where he was able to observe in-coming passengers through a glass partition as their luggage was inspected.

From then on, he spent as much as twenty hours a day at the airport, watching all arrivals from Amsterdam and Tel Aviv, the world's diamond centers.

Spencer no longer believed he could be a competent smuggler; but he was sure he was still detective enough to catch one, and when he did he'd get his savings back and make up for the wasted years. Normally, the duty on diamonds amounted to approximately eight percent. Shipping a hundred thousand dollars worth of cut stones past customs would save eight thousand dollars in import charges.

However, if the smuggled stones had been cut in Russia, the duty would be considerably higher, the saving even greater. All Spencer had to do is spot a smuggler and relieve him of his cargo. Whether the stones were of Russian origin or not didn't matter. He'd be financially secure again. Just like that.

So he watched passengers. He looked first for a familiar face from the past who might be traveling under a false passport. He also studied the arrivals, hoping to spot some tell-tale inconsistency that the customs people missed. Spencer also

watched the other people who stood beside him, looking into the inspection area. When a courier was on a flight, it wasn't unusual for someone to see him safely through customs before making contact with him.

Spencer watched everything carefully and waited patiently between flights. During his days of observation he didn't see even one arrest made by the customs inspectors. Spencer spotted several people who were obviously smuggling something, but it was as though the customs agents were all blind. Unfortunately, none of the suspects appeared to be commercial couriers, so he continued to wait.

Then, one day he watched the passengers from the afternoon flight from Tel Aviv by way of Paris pass through customs. A heavyset man with horn-rimmed glasses caught his attention and held it. He seemed to hold back a bit from the other passengers, and then chose the longest, rather than the shortest, inspection line.

That would have been suspicious enough, but Spencer also recognized the man as a diamond courier he had arrested ten years before at La Guardia. The man was either unconsciously delaying his confrontation with the inspector because of apprehension, or else he felt that the longer line would not be checked as carefully as the others because the inspector would be hurrying to keep up with the crowd. In any case,

Spencer had found the man he was looking for.

He hurried away from the observation window and went to where he could intercept the courier on his way to the cab stands. When the man passed, Spencer fell into step behind him, and when the man entered a taxi, Spencer followed him in and closed the door. The man's lips parted slightly, revealing a gold-capped tooth, but that was the only sign of surprise he registered.

"It's nice to see you again," Spencer said sincerely. "Where did you plan to stay?"

The man hesitated a moment while he thought of a lie, then said, "The Statler-Hilton."

"The Statler-Hilton," Spencer directed the driver, and waited for the cab to pull into traffic before speaking again. "I'm glad you didn't do anything ridiculous."

The man shrugged philosophically.

"I'm too old to run and too fat to fight," he said.

The man shrugged again. He took a silver cigarette case from his inside pocket and handed it to Spencer.

Spencer opened the case carefully and found it packed with uncut diamonds, each wrapped in a tiny square of tissue paper. He snapped the case shut and slid it into his own pocket. He didn't speak again until they were crossing the lobby at the hotel.

"Go to the desk and check in," he ordered.

"Look here," the courier said. "You know better than to think I'll lead you to anyone. Why don't you stop playing games and arrest me?"

"Check in," Spencer repeated. "You'd like me to tell the judge you cooperated, wouldn't you?"

Spencer positioned himself half-way between the hotel desk and the elevators while he watched the courier register. Now came the difficult part. He knew he had to kill the courier or he'd have more to fear from the man's employers than he ever had from the police. Once they were out of sight in the room, he'd have to do it.

The courier came toward him, following a bellboy who carried his suitcase. Spencer joined them and they rode the elevator to the sixth floor. As they stepped from the car and turned right, Spencer heard a voice behind him ask, "Is there a Mr. Rumplemeyer on this floor?"

Spencer froze in mid-stride, as though he had been given an electric

shock. Then he lowered his raised foot to the carpet and turned slowly. A man stood at the open door of the elevator, looking not at the operator, but at him. The man's lips parted in a pleased grin. The broad space between his front teeth identified Gus Maxwell despite his hair being dyed and his freckles being covered by theatrical make-up.

Now Spencer knew why he hadn't seen any arrests while he waited at Kennedy. He himself had been under observation, and they hadn't wanted to take the chance of stopping the courier they thought he was waiting for. They had wanted to get them both.

And here was Maxwell, walking toward him and removing a pair of handcuffs from his belt. As if that weren't bad enough, Maxwell reminded him of the first of the long list of errors he had made.

"My file isn't marked 'Office Assignments Only,'" Gus Maxwell said.

Next Month

COLOR HER DEAD

A Novelet of Strange Dark Terror

By LEO P. KELLEY

She had many friends, all the wrong kind, no morals, no chance. Can you find the dark secret of the little painted lady — and how she met her incredible end?

THE LETTER OF THE LAW

by LESLIE T. WHITE

*Rules—or results? Can a good cop
break a murder without breaking
heads? Here's a case in point.*



DEPARTMENT of LOST STORIES



All through the thirties and forties, Leslie T. White was a well-known, well-praised name among readers who liked their action stories tough and real and their adventure bristling with derring-do and fast paced scenes of man-to-man encounter. The late Mr. White was a successful novelist, but he will always be remembered for his short stories, of which this one, "The Letter of the Law," is a splendid example. It is indeed a rare privilege, to include this tale in our Department of Lost Stories. It deserves its place there. From time to time, in this magazine, you will see this department. When you do, read with care and discrimination. You will be reading a story which, whatever its length, whatever its field, has been remembered and revered as too good to be forgotten. It is a very special treat we bring you this month. Leslie White was always one of the best, and this story is one of his greatest. Read it. You won't forget it for a long time.

THE EDITORS

IT WAS THE first time in Walter V. Preston's nearly half century of life that he had seen a man slain before his eyes.

Having attended his weekly service-club luncheon where Martin McLean, dynamic young publisher of the *News-Sentinel*, had urged business men to insist on cleaner politics. Mr. Preston decided to walk back to his office in the bank and so chanced to go through Belcher Street.

Belcher Street, in the middle forties, is made up of shabby, degenerated brownstone fronts. From out of one of these, as Mr. Preston was

passing on the other side of the street, came a woman and three men.

Precisely at that moment a police-squad car squealed around the nearest corner! Mr. Preston stood still.

As the four people who had left the house reached the sidewalk, the siren snarled once — a warning to stand still. But they began to scatter.

Before the car came to a stop, two detectives rushed from either side. The woman and one of the men darted back up the steps. The other pair started to run south.

Mr. Peyton, hypnotized, absorbed everything.

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One of the detectives charged up the steps, gun in hand. The woman was frantically trying to open the door, which was locked. Her companion swiveled, back against the ancient cast-iron railing. As the detective grabbed for him, the woman unleashed a rasping shriek and flung herself at the officer.

The detective bunted the woman away with the elbow of his gun arm, then lashed up with his left fist. She caught the savage impact flush on her full mouth. With a bleat of pain, she sat down heavily.

The detective turned and leaped on his man. When the latter tried to jerk something out of his pocket, the cop pistol-whipped him unconscious.

The second cop had sprinted and tripped the slower of the running pair. The man skidded on his face, then scrambled to his feet, hands lifting in a gesture of surrender.

The detective jerked up short and slashed the quitter over the head with the flat of his revolver. The man gave off a strangled sob and went down on his hands and knees. He balanced there like a trail-weary pony, blood dripping from his head.

The other fugitive neared the corner. The detective stood almost astraddle his victim and bellowed at the runner to stop. The latter merely ducked his head and scurried in a zig-zag course. The copper braced himself and sighted along the blued steel barrel of his revolver.

Mr. Preston heard the gun bark, witnessed the impact of the bullet

when it struck. The hit runner appeared to make about two long jumps, then pull up short. For an agonized instant he hung suspended before his knees buckled and he folded to the sidewalk.

The street was filling with people. When Mr. Preston started to move across the street, he was stopped by a uniformed policeman who growled. "Come on, keep movin'! This don't concern you."

Walter V. Preston looked coldly at the officer; he was seeing a policeman in a new light. Then he about-faced abruptly and made his way through the gathering crowd to a drugstore on the corner and telephoned the *News-Sentinel*.

The following day, Captain Angus Brandywine hunched his large heavy frame over his desk in Central Police Station. A copy of the *News-Sentinel* opened to the editorial page, separated him from the commissioner of police, Colonel Sneyd, a pompous little man with a waxed mustache which arced out in front like a pair of horns when he was excited. He was excited now.

"Captain!" he shouted. "How much of this is true?"

The editorial under discussion was headed "Our Lawless Police" and by-lined by Martin McLean himself. It gave a graphic and caustic word picture of the carnage that Mr. Preston had witnessed the previous day, and a biting denunciation of Sergeant Tweed and Detective McCluggage, the two officers involved. It cited



numerous instances of legal violations by members of the police department.

Publisher McLean then pointed out how the infamous racketeer, Monk Ettinger, had been captured through the efforts of the *News-Sentinel*, and that the evidence and the testimony of the gangster's former sweetheart, Stella Bancroft, who was now protected by the paper, was the result of decent investigation, not this butcher type of work.

The article wound up with a blunt demand that the newly appointed commissioner of police, Colonel Sneyd, immediately purge the department of Tweed, McCluggage, and the rest of their stripe and henceforth see that laws were obeyed by the police officers as well as the citizens in general.

Brandywine removed his brier. "Mostly true," he admitted dryly, "as far as it goes."

Sneyd's rosy skin mottled. "It goes far enough to suit me!" he panted.

"Call in these two men — I'm going to suspend them at once!"

"Take it easy. Tweed and McCluggage left town this morning on an important homicide case. I won't be able to contact them for a couple of days. Anyhow, they don't warrant suspension. You haven't got all the facts."

"You sit there and defend those two murdering scoundrels?" yelled the commissioner. "Don't you know that McCluggage punched a woman in the mouth, and then brutally beat her companion unconscious? And Sergeant Tweed lacerated the skull of a helpless man who tried to surrender peacefully, and instead of trying to capture the other man he deliberately shot him dead — in the back, too. Is that the kind of a detective bureau you are commanding?"

The skipper rested his elbows on the soiled desk blotter and his big head sank between his shoulder blades. With his aquiline nose and slitted eyes, he resembled a hawk.

"I'm commanding one of the best bureaus in the country, Colonel Sneyd, and if you'll just cool off enough to hear me out, I'll give you some facts that young McLean neglected to include in his sentimentalizing. Those cattle you are sweating about are the Sagel mob. The dame is Minnie Torquay, a marijuana addict with a record as long as your face. That little lady applied the hot cigar butts to the feet of a watchman in St. Louis last month while her pals held him. After they had finally

murdered him, she planted a kiss on his forehead. Nice lovin' gal! Her playmate who got his ears pinned back by Al McCluggage is Nuts Jellife, a vicious murderin' three-time loser. Either of this pair would have torn the heart out of McCluggage if given half a chance.

"Tweed's two were even worse. Manny Sagel, the rat he shot, was a cop killer, bank robber and general murderer. We know of at least twelve killings by his hand. It was either kill him or let him escape. The one Tweed slugged is Tony Paonessa, the chief torturer of the mob. Tweed couldn't hang on to them both."

"If Sagel was that bad, he should have been brought into court, like Ettinger will be," Sneyd protested.

"Monk Ettinger hasn't come up for trial yet," Brandywine observed ironically. "If there had been time, we might have sent a crew out to the Belcher Street hideaway and taken this outfit quiet-like. But yesterday Tweed got a hot tip from a stool that the Sagel quartet was hiding in that rooming house and was just ready to pull out. Tweed telephoned the station and struck out with Al McCluggage. They got there just in time. They didn't dare lose the upper hand for an instant. There was no way of knowing how many other hoodlums were around and these men were killers."

Sneyd exhaled through drawn lips. "These people are human beings! I want Tweed and McCluggage fired! I'm not interested in your rationali-

zation. We may as well understand each other right now, Captain Brandywine. While I dislike very much to interfere with the actual mechanics of this bureau, as long as I am commissioner of police and therefore responsible to the public, your detectives shall obey the laws."

"You've been a successful business man," the captain pointed out. "Less than three weeks ago the mayor appointed you commissioner, and that covers your police experience. Me, I've been a cop for over thirty years. I'm chief of the bureau because I'm supposed to know my business. Now you walk in here after reading a newspaper sob story and tell me how to handle my men."

Sneyd punctuated each word by banging the flat of his hand on the desk:

"I — don't — care — how — long — you've — been — a — cop!" he bellowed. "Men who violate the laws are criminals — whether they wear a police badge or not! And you'll run this department according to the laws you are sworn to uphold, Captain Brandywine, or, by the Lord Harry, I'll see that you don't run it!"

Brandywine shrugged. "You're the commissioner."

"The newspapermen are waiting in my office for a statement," the colonel grunted, slightly mollified. "I shall tell them what I now tell you — that Tweed and McCluggage will be suspended, and that, taking effect immediately the members of this de-

ective bureau will follow the letter of the law in enforcing it."

After Sneyd had left the office, Brandywine snorted, then buzzed for his secretary. When Sally stuck her head through the doorway, he said:

"Tell Lucy and Suitcase to come in here."

As she backed out, he raked a match alive. Two passing sirens filled the old station house with sound. He recognized number seven patrol by the rising crescendo of its caterwaul; number seven's siren was geared to the crankshaft. The other wail, quicker, shriller, came from the electriciren on the robbery squad's car. As the noise merged into the normal sound of the city he sucked the flame into the bowl of his brier.

Two men suddenly walked in. Sergeant Lucius Tweed, fiery and forty, piloted the crack homicide quad. Beefy Al McCluggage, affectionately known as "Suitcase," specialized on dips and buncs — pickpockets and confidence swindlers — but was at present assisting Tweed to lean out racketeers. Like Brandywine, they had both done their stretch in harness.

"Sneyd was just in," Captain Brandywine said laconically. "You two had better go fishing some place."

Al McCluggage grinned ruefully. Although it had been over twenty years since he left the farm, he still resembled an overgrown self-conscious farm hand. His voice was high-pitched, off key.

"About the only time I ever get fishin' is when we change commissioners," Suitcase said. "Where'll we go this time, Lucy?"

Lucius Tweed removed his nose glasses, as he invariably did when his battling spirit was up.

"If I didn't have but seventeen more months to go before I'm eligible for pension," he barked, "I'd go down and bust this McLean pup in the nose." He thumped the open *News-Sentinel*. "I've been absorbing this stuff for nearly twenty years an' I'm fed up with it!"

"Well, you oughtta be used to it by now," Brandywine observed. "Don't expect any sympathy from me—I've got enough grief in my lap. Now every time we crack a joint we get a search warrant; unless you actually witness a crime being committed you can't risk a pinch without a warrant of arrest; all suspects are to be brought direct to jail immediately following arrest, and every prisoner has the right to refuse to answer questions."

McCluggage bubbled with laughter.

"The bureau can't operate that way!" Tweed argued.

"I know, I know," Brandywine said. "But Sneyd is head of the police department; I'm only an office boy. We either do as he says or get staked out in the boondocks with the goats. I'm too old for a beat, Lucy. Anyhow, he'll learn his lesson sooner or later."

"Yeah, but in the meantime . . . ?"

"We carry out orders," Brandywine finished for him. "I remember when I first joined the department we had a commissioner who came in on a reform wave something like Colonel Sneyd did. We had a departmental policy that a citizen wasn't drunk unless he lay down in the gutter. But this new commissioner—I forgot his name, we've had so many since—made a rule that all drunks should be arrested and hauled into court; a man *was drunk if a copper could smell liquor in his breath.*"

"Just about as dumb as Sneyd!" Tweed grunted.

Brandywine chuckled reminiscently. "Old Ned Elliott was chief, so he talked it over with some of us. The commissioner's order came through on a Thursday, as I remember it. Well, that Saturday night all leaves were canceled. Right after the theaters started to let out, the fun began. The boys arrested everybody with the faintest aroma of alcohol about them. They even got the D.A. and the mayor's father. With no night or Sunday courts, everybody opened Monday morning . . ." Brandywine swore softly. ". . . Well, the commissioner was laughed out of office—and after that a man wasn't drunk unless he lay down in the gutter again.

"Now scram out of here. Lay low for a couple of days, but leave a number with Sally where I can reach you in a hurry. Something will break in the meantime and we'll settle back to normal again."

Something broke much soone than even Captain Brandywine anticipated. Within thirty-six hours o the appearance of the lawless police editorial, its author, Martin McLean was kidnaped. Called by Colone Snéyd to the Emergency Hospital Brandywine heard the details of the snatch from the battered lips o McLean's young wife. Quieted by sedative, she lay with her face swathed in bandages, her broke nose in a silver splint.

"Martin and I had been to the theater," she whispered. "When Martin stopped the car in front of the garage and stepped out to open the doors, three men leaped out of the shadows of the hedge . . ." She began to sob.

"And then . . . ?" the captain prompted.

"They grabbed Mart! I jumped out to help him. Then one of those awfy men caught me by the hair, jerked my head around, and hit me across the nose with something. I hear Mart swearing, and I groped for him but they knocked me down and began kicking my head. I guess I fainted then."

Sneyd made a clucking noise. "Terrible—terrible! You can identify the men, I hope?"

She shook her head weakly. "I was so dark—and I didn't think of that."

Sneyd risked a glance at Captain Brandywine.

"Don't you worry, Mrs. McLean. Your husband will be returned to

ou. I shall personally assume complete charge of the case."

"Oh, I know you will bring him back to me, Colonel," she whispered. He had so much confidence in you."

Captain Brandywine bent over the ed.

"Of course you couldn't be expected to recognize those thugs, Mrs. McLean," he said quietly. "But think now — was anything said by any of them?"

She hesitated a long moment. "I think one of them said Mart was a tough little punk for an editorial writer, or something like that."

"Why, splendid!" the captain encouraged her. "Now try to recall — as that spoken with any accent, was said coolly, or excitedly, or how?"

"I think it was a low, rasping voice. The man sounded just casual." That was all she could tell.

On the ride back to headquarters Colonel Sneyd was loquacious.

"There will undoubtedly be a ransom note from the kidnapers," he intoned. "Martin McLean was very healthy. We must be on the watch for that." He looked sharply at Brandywine. "Don't you agree?"

"You're handling this, but you'rearking up the wrong tree. Unless I iss my guess, McLean's snatch is e direct result of that editorial you ot so excited about. That remark rs. McLean overhead sort of checks e."

"Kindly be explicit."

"O. K. The *News-Sentinel* is attempting to build circulation by a



big publicity campaign, and McLean's been trying to make the world over to his own ideals. He's still young and, like some other people, he's got a lot to learn. So the *News-Sentinel* started an attack on Monk Ettinger and his mob. They put in their own district attorney and their own commissioner of police."

"Captain Brandywine! I don't like your . . ."

The skipper shrugged. "You're not expected to like it. But Monk Ettinger was indicted on evidence dug up by the *News-Sentinel*, particularly on the statement of Stella Bancroft. That testimony will send Ettinger to the chair unless something happens to the Bancroft woman."

"That's ridiculous! In the first place, Stella Bancroft is safely hidden to prevent retaliation, and furthermore, Monk Ettinger is in jail on a murder charge."

"If you recall," Brandywine re-

minded the other, "McLean bragged about just that in his editorial. He explained that, rather than trust the police department, the *News-Sentinel* was hiding Bancroft so that they could produce her at the trial. That was one time he let his mouth run too long. Some of Monk's boys are probably working on McLean right now, making him tell where Stella is cached. Since you're running this show, you'd better worry about that. Do you know where she is?"

Sneyd shook his head. "McLean kept that to himself." He waited for Brandywine to go on; but the captain had retired into his shell.

"Who was next in authority to Ettinger in his organization?" the colonel prodded.

"A hood known as Shady Donovan. Monk's orders would be carried from the jail by Sam Ricardo, his mouthpiece. Shady would act on 'em."

"Do you know where this man Donovan lives?"

"We can locate him," Brandywine admitted. "We can tap our stools."

Colonel Sneyd sniffed. "Please send for him at once. And, captain, I want the practice of utilizing stool pigeons discontinued at once. It falls in the same loathsome category as the third degree and brings disgrace on the good name of the department."

Brandywine munched the pipe across his mouth.

It took Captain Brandywine less than two hours to locate Shady Donovan and have him brought into head-

quarters. Under the "letter of the law" ruling, Donovan's attorney, San Ricardo, was in attendance. The commissioner himself handled the interrogation:

"Now Donovan, I want the truth from you. I understand you are Monk Ettinger's right hand man."

Donovan, a squat chunky man slouched forward in his chair, elbow on knees, stumpy fingers revolving pearl-gray fedora.

"Who's this Monk Ettinger?" he sneered.

Sneyd bristled. "See here, let have none of that insolence! Marti McLean, the publisher, was kidnaped last night. We have a very strong suspicion that you had something to do with that."

Donovan smirked,

"Keep quiet, Shady," Ricard counseled; then turned to Sneyd. "Listen, commissioner, you can't pin anything on to my client. Donovan came in here because you sent for him but he isn't going to be talkin' into no frameup."

"Nobody is attempting a frameup on Donovan," Sneyd retorted sharply. "We are simply seeking to ascertain the truth."

Donovan snickered, then quieted abruptly as his shifting eyes encountered the pale metallic stare of Captain Brandywine.

"Well, Donovan isn't talking," the lawyer announced. "If that's all you've got to say, we're going." The rose.

Colonel Sneyd's face turned red

bluewhite of stale dough. "Just a ninnute! I've tried to be perfectly fair with you two, but Donovan will answer my questions or, by the Lord Harry, I'll have him arrested!"

"On what charge?" Ricardo challenged.

"If you're tryin' to grab yourself a load of publicity," Donovan sneered, "go pick yourself another sucker, mister. You ain't got a thing on me."

Sneyd shouted: "Arrest that man, Captain!"

Brandywine had risen quietly and sauntered around his desk. As Donovan turned from his challenge to Sneyd, they met face to face. The captain reached suddenly for his hip pocket, and Donovan tripped over a chair getting out of the way. But Brandywine merely pulled out a handkerchief and grinned.

"You can't pinch me!" Donovan elped, but when the captain touched his shoulder, he subsided.

Sam Ricardo smiled.

"Sit tight, Shady," he advised. "And keep your mouth buttoned. I'll have you out within an hour. This hing has possibilities, at that." He collected his hat and gloves, and, with an ironical bow to the commissioner and Brandywine left the office.

The captain eyed the wary Donovan for a full minute before opening the door of the squad room and beckoning one of the detectives.

"The commissioner wants this carbon locked up" he growled, indicating the prisoner. "Book him to the

commissioner as a "hold for investigation."

When the door closed, Colonel Sneyd mopped his moist forehead. "Why, the impudent scoundrels! And I tried to be square with them! Well, we'll see that Donovan stays in a cell until he learns to be civil!"

"Shady will be out within half an hour," Brandywine prophesied. "Sam Ricardo will have a writ of habeas corpus here, and you'll have to release Donovan or go into court and present logical reasons for holding him. You have no evidence, so that's that. No, Colonel. Shady will be on the street in a few minutes, and you'll probably have a false-arrest suit on your hands. You ordered Shady held; and you can't substantiate a charge."

"But you do that every day!"

Brandywine wagged his head. "We never stick our necks into a hole unless we can crawl through it."

The next forty-eight hours were the longest years of Colonel Sneyd's life. As Brandywine had foretold, Donovan was sprung on a writ, and although the commissioner put one of his own private investigators out to locate his quarters, no trace of him could be found. Donovan had vanished almost as soon as he hit the street.

But that was the least of the colonel's problems. The press of the entire nation clamored for action, especially the *News-Sentinel*. McLean's own paper. Reporters hounded the

commissioner until he crawled into Brandywine's office at Central and tried to bury his head.

"What's the matter with your detectives?" he badgered the captain. "Here two full days have gone by and absolutely nothing has been accomplished!"

Brandywine shrugged; but, despite a calm that seemed to border on indifference, he had not taken his clothes off since the McLean snatch.

"Don't try to pass the heat on to me," he warned Sneyd. "You've been handling this case like a story-book detective, insisting that my men run around looking for clues and watching mailboxes for ransom notes. You demanded the suspension of McCluggage and Tweed, two of my very best men on this sort of a case; you stopped me from ordering a general round-up of known criminals by your idiotic order about the necessity of warrants; you made a public declaration that the police can't use stool pigeons, and now they've scattered; you bungled the handling of Donovan. Now you want to know what's the matter with *my* detectives!"

Sneyd daubed at a sweating face.

"I can't understand why we have received no communication from the kidnapers," he mumbled. "Mrs. McLean sent for me today." He shuddered. "She acted as though I were personally responsible for her husband's absence."

Brandywine scowled. "What do

you expect? You assumed the responsibility when the case first broke. And unless I miss my guess mister, young McLean's undergoing a mighty unpleasant experience. They're probably trying to make him talk — to tell where Stella Bancroft is hidden. And the reason we can't find that out is because people like you and McLean undermine the public confidence in the department. If I knew, I'd put out a squad to protect her — she's going to need it! As it is, there's nothing to do but wait for a break."

"Wait, wait, wait!" bleated Sneyd and scurried out.

He had been gone less than half an hour when a telephone call came from Matt Mathews of the homicide squad.

"I'm out here at Loma Sanitarium" he reported. "Less than twenty minutes ago, three hoods strong armed their way into this joint and blasted a woman patient. She's registered here as Mary Doyle. They pulped her face but a I recognized her. She's *Stella Bancraft*."

Captain Brandywine swore softly "I was expecting it. Any trail?"

"Not a thing. They roughhoused the staff so nobody can remember anything."

"Well, stay with it and see what you can find. Hold up any report until you hear from me and try to keep it quiet for a few hours. Keep me advised." As he finished, Colonel Sneyd walked into the office and sank directly into a chair. Brandy-

vine got up and came around the desk.

"Now listen to me!" he barked at the commissioner's face. "Like I expected, we've found Stella Bancroft."

"Oh, good, good!" breathed the Colonel.

"Good nothing! She was riddled with slugs and her face was hacked at to delay identification. This means that Ettinger's gorillas tortured McLean until he told where Bancroft was hidden and now that they've slaughtered her, they're all through with him."

"You mean . . . McLean is dead?"

"Possibly; but I doubt it. They'll wait until they get word from Shady Donovan."

The colonel wilted. "Take charge, Captain," he whispered huskily.

"That's what I'm going to do if you try to interfere, Sneyd, I'll lug you. When this is all over you can take action if you want to. In the meantime sit there and take some lessons in police work."

Sneyd shriveled.

"I don't see what can be done," he mumbled. "If we could only locate Donovan!"

Brandywine snorted, scooped up the telephone. "Gimme the radio roadcast room! . . . Hello, O'Brien? . . . Broadcast a call for prowl car 2 to rush back here to headquarters immediately. What? . . . Sure I know 2's been out of service for two days. Quit arguin' an' get out that

call!" As he hung up he buzzed for his secretary.

"Sally, see who's in the squad room. If Schnur or Christian are in, tell 'em to pick out a couple of experienced crews. I want tommy guns, gas, and axes. Have McGee and Trask hot up those fast wagons — we're going to roll in a few minutes. And, Sally, when Lucy and Suitcase come in see that no one disturbs us. Get goin'."

While Sneyd gaped in astonishment, Brandywine went to a desk drawer, took out a well worn service revolver, flipped the cylinder and checked the load. Ordinarily he carried but five shells in the chambers, leaving an empty beneath the hammer; but now he slipped in a sixth shell, spun the cylinder experimentally, and shoved the gun back into the drawer.

The door swung open. The colonel's eyes bulged . . . for sandwiched between Detective Al McCluggage and Sergeant Tweed was Shady Donovan.

The hoodlum was wild-eyed and disheveled. When he recognized the commissioner he loosed a bleat of anguish.

"It ain't constitutional!" he squealed.

"Where did you find him so quickly?" Sneyd gasped. "My own men could not locate him anywhere!"

"Find me? Find me?" shrilled Donovan. "They been ridin' me around in a radio car for two whole

days an' nights! I been livin' on hamburgers, without sleep. I been kidnaped! I'm gonna sue . . ."

"Brandywine circled his desk. "I knew you'd eventually dump the case into my lap," he told Sneyd, "so as soon as Ricardo sprung this skunk I had McCluggage and Tweed pick him up. If we hadn't, he'd have been buried so deep we never would have found him."

Colonel Sneyd gulped. "You mean . . . it's *true*? You actually kidnaped him — you've been riding him through the streets for two days?"

"Oh, we took him fishin' the first day," McCluggage offered.

Captain Brandywine suddenly palmed a handful of Donovan's shirt front and drew him close.

"Shady," he said, with the murmur of sandpaper rubbing together, "you were right — this is a kidnaping. Your mob kidnaped McLean; they tortured information of a hide-away out of him; then they went to that spot and committed murder. Those are the steps, Shady, one by one, that we are going to follow — so you know what to expect. We're at the second stage. I'm asking you: Where are your boys holding McLean?"

"You can't frame me!" Donovan screamed. "I don't know nothin' about McLean!"

Captain Brandywine looked reproachfully at Sergeant Tweed. "You haven't softened him up, I see." He drove his free fist into Shady's mid-section.

Colonel Sneyd let an involuntary yelp escape him. Then a peculiar glaze filmed his eyes, like drawn shades on a window. His full lip vanished into a thin disillusioned line.

Brandywine was talking; "Shady you're a tough lad; I know tha McLean was just as tough — tougher, in fact, because it took you gorillas over two days of torture to get the location of Stella Bancrof out of him. Now, we tried to be al nice an' legal about this . . ."

He risked an oblique glance at Sneyd before continuing: "But the fishing trip is over. The fast wagons are ready an' the gun crews waiting in the squad room. You're first Shady, me lad, and I'm listenin'."

Shady Donovan let his head revolve and his shoe-button eyes flickered off one hard face after another until they eventually settled on Colonel Sneyd — Shady's last hope. And Shady paled. For Colonel Sneyd's features were warped into an unfamiliar mask; the bumptious little business man began to look strangely like a *cop*!

"I want a mouthpiece!" Shady bowled. "I got rights . . ."

"Oh hell!" Tweed growled, and backhanded him across the mouth. Al McCluggage sighed regretfully like a man ending a pleasant vacation, and tangled his fingers in Donovan's oily hair.

"Commissioner," Suitcase suggested respectfully, "maybe you better light a cigar. Shady's boys usually

burn holes in a victim's feet, so it's something he'll understand."

"We're waitin', Shady," the captain observed quietly.

Colonel Sneyd did not light a cigar; he merely squatted stiffly in his chair and shared. But McCluggage's sardonic humor was extraneous for Donovan shrieked abruptly:

"I'll talk! I'll talk!"

They heaved him into a chair, where he blubbered the information through his fingers, while Sally looking cool and detached, took it down in shorthand! Five minutes later as a harness bull hauled Shady Donovan down to a cell, Captain Brandywine leaned over his desk, retrieved his big service revolver and sheathed it in his shoulder holster.

"If you sit here," he told the commissioner, as he started to follow Tweed and McCluggage into the squad room, "I'll phone you just as soon as we make the knockover."

Colonel Sneyd bobbed to his feet. "If you don't mind, I shall accompany you." He saw the belligerent expression that suddenly shadowed the captain's horsy face, and added hastily "Purely as an observer, Captain I... I'm learning."

"In that case," grunted Brandywine, "come along."

Two bureau cars were purring at the alley entrance as the captain and his crews swung through the station doors. Doc Trask eased in the clutch of the lead car as the boys hit the running boards. Captain Brandywine let the forward motion

of the big machine swing him into the front seat.

"Whale Alley, just north of Cooper," he told the driver, "We've located McLean. Soup it up, but no siren." He glanced into the car where Tweed, Sneyd, and three other detectives hunched for a fast trip through traffic. "You got all the equipment?"

A blond Swede named Christian answered, "All set, Chief."

Colonel Sneyd stood up well under his lesson. He even seemed to enjoy the attack on the filthy abandoned cannery where the mob had holed up with their prisoner. He never whimpered when his own eyes were almost blinded by the gas used to smoke out the hoodlums. He was standing beside Tweed when the sergeant killed one of the kidnapers, and his only comment was:

"Good shooting, sergeant!"

But he went sick at his stomach, when they found Martin McLean, and fainted when he saw the charred feet and mangled nails.

Captain Brandywine didn't see the commissioner for nearly a week. But he did not miss him for there was plenty of work. From the hospital he received daily reports of Martin McLean's progress. For days it was nip and tuck, but surgery triumphed.

When the publisher was finally able to talk, he told a story of torture that sickened the toughest of his reporters, and, what was more to the point, he dictated and caused

to be published the gruesome details.

The next afternoon, Colonel Sneyd closeted himself with Captain Brandywine and they had a long talk.

The day watch had just gone off duty when the skipper returned to his own office about five o'clock and found Lucy Tweed and Suitcase McCluggage awaiting him.

"Sally told us you'd gone over to see the commissioner," the sergeant began. "We want to know

about our suspension. Did he mention it?"

Captain Brandywine grinned. He settled his old brier comfortably between his teeth and perched on a corner of the desk.

"The commissioner mentioned it," he admitted. "Matter of fact, he mentioned a lot of things. Forget about the suspension. Summing it up — well, it's the old story. A man isn't drunk until he lies in the gutter and the law isn't broken if it works."



Next Month

Another DEPARTMENT OF LOST STORIES Masterpiece

THE HUNTED

by W. R. BURNETT

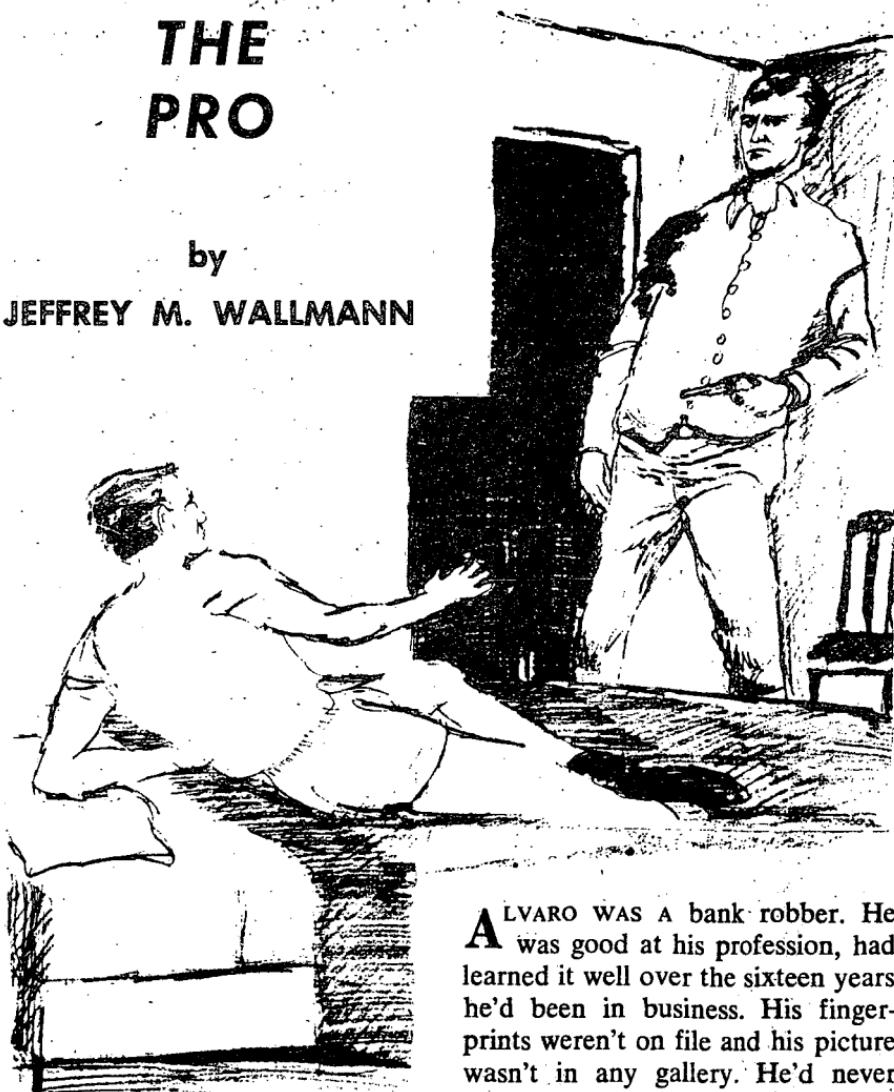
He was a walking dead man, and he knew it. All was gone — his woman, his hopes, any chance for a future. His lips tightened. When a man knows that a bullet with his name on it is waiting around any corner, that man must walk alone always with his fear. Unless he is man enough to do something about it while there is still time . . . Don't miss this arresting story by the man who wrote "Little Caesar" and "The Iron Man". It will feature the next issue of the magazine.

*He was a careful man, schooled
in the ways of evil. Nothing
could bring him down — nothing
but a little bit of dying . . .*

THE PRO

by

JEFFREY M. WALLMANN



ALVARO WAS A bank robber. He was good at his profession, had learned it well over the sixteen years he'd been in business. His fingerprints weren't on file and his picture wasn't in any gallery. He'd never been arrested or picked up on sus-

picion. That's how good he was. He wasn't one to make mistakes. Jack Alvaro was a pro.

So was Sammy Rasmussen, though he'd taken a fall in Detroit in October of fifty-four for breaking and entering. Not that his record mattered to Alvaro. He'd picked Rasmussen after the plans had been made and all he needed was one good man, and after tomorrow he'd never see him again. Their paths crossed just long enough to do the job, and beyond that there wasn't a link between the two men.

At eight-thirty in the morning, Alvaro parked the stolen powder-blue sedan in the space next to the ten-minute zone fronting the Eastern National Exchange Bank. At a quarter to ten Rasmussen joined him. Alvaro went over the operation with him again, Rasmussen nodding his head, for he'd heard it many times before.

At ten the bank guard opened the doors and the half-dozen waiting customers filed in. At ten-five, Alvaro started the engine and left it idling; then he and Rasmussen got out and opened the trunk.

The nylon stockings were the kind women snag by the millions every year. The suitcases were nondescript grey fiberglass overnighters, medium priced, with sturdy locks and plastic handles. The two guns were .38 service revolvers, six-and-a-half-inch barrels, blue steel, and probably the most common handgun in America.

They all looked similar and they

were easy to come by and dispose of. Both Alvaro and Rasmussen wore tan wash-and-wear slacks and white shirts open at the throat and leather gloves, discount house quality as everyday as the stockings. It was little touches to detail such as these which had made Alvaro as successful as he had been.

By ten-eight, the plan was rolling smoothly. They'd walked in with the stockings over their faces and herded the guard, employees, and customers to the middle of the high-ceilinged marble lobby.

Rasmussen had both revolvers and stood to one side of the now locked, now shade-drawn entrance doors, covering the group while Alvaro cut the main power and alarm systems and walked with the two suitcases to the line of cashier cages.

Alvaro would have liked a pistol in his hand, but it was better with Rasmussen holding both of them. Rasmussen carried them because he looked the meaner of the two. Alvaro was thin and ferret-like, while Rasmussen was barrel-chested and tall and when he spoke it was harsh, like a drill sergeant. Also, Alvaro couldn't have carried the two suitcases if he had been armed, and that was the whole idea, to fill up the cases with money.

So Alvaro had to keep telling himself that everything was all right and that there wasn't anything to worry about, that Rasmussen had everybody covered and docile. Yet still the beads of sweat rolled down his

forehead and into his eyes, making them sting. There was nothing he could do about it though, not with the stocking over his face.

The Eastern National Exchange Bank was an old one, set in the middle of the town's industrial area. Paydays were on Fridays or twice monthly, on the first and fifteenth, and Alvaro figured that on a date when both kinds of paydays fell together, the bank would have double the amount of cash on hand for the local workers. He had bided his time, waiting for such a day to roll around.

Finally it had: Friday, July fifteenth. It was a sweltering blast furnace of a day, with the sun making the concrete shimmer and the black-top sticky and the indoors muggy. It was a lousy day for a robbery, Alvaro thought as he worked, one he wouldn't have picked if he could have avoided it. The heat made people do crazy things.

Alvaro scooped up the packets of money and dropped them in the suitcases, moving quickly from one cage to another, his fingers moist in the gloves, his eyes darting occasionally to look at Rasmussen and the group. The take was better than he'd hoped; he made a rough estimate that they would walk out with over sixty thousand dollars. He latched the cases, both of them bulging, and left the last teller's cage.

There hadn't been a sound from the bystanders, except for one old lady who was crying softly. Alvaro's

shoes clicked on the hollow marble tile as he crossed the lobby to Rasmussen. The octagonal pendulum clock over the vice-president's desk seemed inordinately loud as it ticked off the seconds.

Alvaro was halfway across the lobby when Rasmussen made his mistake. It was a mistake that Alvaro never would have made, but then Rasmussen wasn't the pro Alvaro was. Rasmussen walked a few steps to his right, his eyes glittering with success, and his few steps placed Alvaro between him and the guard.

Perhaps it was the heat, making the brain more emotional. Perhaps it was the guard's personality, which was a combination of hero day-dreams and frustration over his mundane job. Perhaps it was because the guard, a retired cop, hated criminals with a passion in the coolest of weather.

Whatever, he took foolish advantage of the situation. He reached for his service revolver, unthinking of the havoc a gun battle might cause the bystanders or himself, but filled with the mental image of a large hole in the heavy-set robber's chest. His hopes were premature. Alvaro, the pro that he was, seemed to have eyes in the back of his head and he reacted immediately.

He yelled, "Sam! Look out, Sam!" as he whipped around. He threw one of the suitcases at the guard, catching the guard in the side just as he fired. The revolver flew from his

grip, skittering across the polished floor.

The one shot caught Rasmussen high in the shoulder. He screamed and clapped his other hand to the wound, his arm jerking upward and sending one of the guns arching through the air.

Alvaro dove for one gun, the guard for the other. Alvaro rolled around, a bullet whining past his ear, and he saw the guard crouched a few feet from him, taking aim. Then he saw Rasmussen bring his other pistol around and fire. The guard made a noise in his throat and toppled over.

Alvaro scrambled to his feet, shaken but not rattled. He brandished his gun, covering for Rasmussen as he unlocked the doors. Then he slipped the gun into the waistband of his pants, picked up the cases, and ran. The two of them hit the sidewalk together, Alvaro off balance from the suitcases and Rasmussen staggering a bit from his wound.

Neither looked back but kept their eyes on the idling sedan and ran like hell. As they pulled away from the curb, the people came rushing out of the bank, shouting and screaming.

Alvaro drove. He ripped the stocking from his face and wiped his wet face with his arm and looked at his partner, who was leaning against the door and moaning. Then he turned back to the task of driving, and some luck still held. The traffic lights were steadily green, and

Alvaro went with the flow, squelching the urge to speed, knowing such action would only draw attention to them.

The sweat continued to pour from him, plastering his shirt to the back of the seat, and he perfunctorily cursed himself for not having stolen an air-conditioned car. Still, there was no use denying it. They'd gotten away with over sixty thousand dollars.

"We made it, Sammy," he said, grinning. "Hot damn, we made it."

Rasmussen groaned and hugged his shoulder.

"I mean, there was a little fracas, and we'll have to see about that shoulder of yours. But we got the money and we got away." Alvaro smacked his lips, a habit of his when he was pleased. "Yes, sir, we got the money and got away."

Rasmussen didn't reply. He had his own dark thoughts about the subject.

A half-mile from the bank, Alvaro switched cars. Rasmussen had parked his station wagon at the entrance of a deserted, blank-walled alley before coming to the bank. Alvaro pulled in behind the wagon, threw the cases in the back, and helped Rasmussen. He took an extra moment to remove Rasmussen's stocking and gloves, then he drove out of the alley.

Some months previously Alvaro had rented a small cottage and attached garage in an out-of-the-way motor court at the edge of the in-

dustrial section. This was the second time he had been there, the first time being when he had located it, and he had handled the negotiations over the phone, sending the rent money in cash through the mails. The landlord had never seen him and never would. The district catered to the unskilled workers of the area and consisted of taverns, rundown apartments and houses, and weed- and garbage-strewn fields.

Across from the motor court was a vacant lot which was used by the neighborhood for extra parking space, and among the cars was Alvaro's five-year-old hardtop with its bashed fender and broken grille. At the moment it held all of Alvaro's belongings, for he had moved out of his rooming house the night before after giving his landlady her two-week notice and no cause for suspicion.

He had no intention of staying at the cottage. Just long enough to fence the money and wait out the roadblocks, and then he was going. Rasmussen could stay if he wanted to, but Alvaro had rented the cottage expressly as a hideout, and no more. He opened the sagging plank door of the garage and drove the wagon inside. He took the cases and after Rasmussen had staggered into the cottage he followed, bolting the garage door behind him.

Rasmussen lay down on the couch and shivered. His shirt was drenched with blood. Alvaro took the guns and placed them on the coffee table,



then unbuttoned Rasmussen's shirt.

"Hey," Rasmussen groaned, "take it easy."

"I've got to get the shirt off, Sammy. Raise your arm."

"I can't," Rasmussen said, gritting his teeth, but somehow he did.

Alvaro rolled up the shirt and threw it in the garbage, got a towel from the bathroom and started inspecting the wound. He wasn't a doctor, but he could see that it was bad. The slug was buried somewhere around the shoulder blade and socket. Alvaro shook his head.

"Bad, huh?" Rasmussen asked shakily.

"Not good, Sammy. The bullet's still in you."

"Oh." A glaze seemed to film over Rasmussen's eyes. "We—we have to get it out, Jack. Find a doctor and get it out."

Alvaro shook his head. "Can't do that, Sammy. A doctor sees you and he'll go straight to the cops. You know that."

"But—"

"Let me go to the drug store. I'll get some bandages and things to stop the bleeding. In a few days you'll be well enough to get to Mexico. Down there they won't ask any questions, and you can bask in the sun all day. Okay?"

Rasmussen didn't answer. He'd passed out.

Alvaro drove his hardtop to a small shopping center a couple of miles from the court. He bought some cotton and gauze and tape and antiseptic, but the druggist wouldn't sell cat-gut or needle without a prescription, so Alvaro had to return without them.

Rasmussen was conscious when he got back, but a fever had started. Alvaro boiled water and washed the wound as best he could, taping the shoulder tightly. Rasmussen drifted into a moaning sleep.

Alvaro turned on the radio and while waiting for the news he counted the take. Sixty-three thousand, three hundred and fifty dollars. He smiled—and let the bills drift through his fingers. After the fence and the split with Rasmussen, he'd have

twenty-one thousand, one hundred and sixteen dollars and sixty-six cents. He wasn't going to squabble over the extra penny. Let Rasmussen have sixty-seven cents. After all, he was the one who'd been shot.

The fence took a third of the original take. It couldn't be helped, not as long as the banks kept money around from which they'd recorded the serial numbers. A robber never knew which part of his take was safe to spend, and a few of Alvaro's acquaintances were in prison because they had taken a chance and spent the wrong portion. The banks made no secret of what they did, hoping that it would deter thefts, but the pros merely sold their take to a fence, who gave them clean money in return.

Alvaro had arranged for a fence. Tomorrow, assuming they hadn't been caught in the meantime, Alvaro and Rasmussen were to meet him and exchange the money.

The radio reported the holdup and that the guard had died in surgery. Alvaro was sorry about the guard. Now capture meant a murder rap. But it had been either the guard or him, and of the two he preferred it to be the guard.

The wound started to bleed again two hours later. Rasmussen began to get a little hysterical, especially after the second bandaging failed to do any good. He thrashed and groaned, his breathing progressively labored and his skin growing to a peculiar waxy pallor.

"Jack, please help me. A doctor, must have a doctor . . ." Rasmussen whispered. Then in the middle of a sentence he stopped. He'd sunk into unconsciousness again.

Alvaro looked at his partner for a long moment.

Then he picked up the two suitcases and his gun and left.

It was, he figured, a better decision than kidnaping a doctor. Rasmussen had bled too much. His partner could die any time, even with medical attention, and a doctor here threatened his own chances of survival.

As it was, Rasmussen wouldn't be found for some time, and when he was he would either be dead or so close to it that he wouldn't be of any help to the cops. As long as Rasmussen wouldn't or couldn't talk, Alvaro was still the unknown man.

In other words, there was no reason why Alvaro shouldn't skip with all the money.

He had to move some of his possessions from the trunk of his car to the back seat before there was room for the suitcases. He backed the hardtop out of the lot again, and drove into town. He pulled into a service station on Grand Avenue, and while the attendant was filling the car with gas, Alvaro went to the phone booth. He dropped in a dime and called Cibeles, his fence.

"I'm ready to make the trade now," he said to Cibeles.

"Good. I'll see you tomorrow," the fence replied. He sounded bored.

"No, not tomorrow. Today." Alvaro paused, then asked, "You do have the money, don't you?"

"Tomorrow," Cibeles insisted.

"Why the stall? You knew the job was being pulled!"

"Don't yell at me."

Alvaro took a deep breath. Then: "Ten per cent more if we make the switch today."

There was a long silence, and for a second Alvaro thought that Cibeles had left. Finally Cibeles said, "I'll see. Where can I contact you?"

Alvaro looked out of the windows of the booth. Across the street from the station was a motel, its vacancy sign lit.

"I'll be at the El Rancho Motel on Grand, registered under the name of Ronald Winkle."

"Ronald Winkle," Cibeles repeated as though not believing it.

"Right," Alvaro said coldly. He hated the name, but whoever would be suspicious of a man named Ronald Winkle? It was a good cover identity, and he had the wallet and identification to back it up. "And look, Cibeles," Alvaro added, "I better hear from you before midnight."

"Why?"

"Because then it'll be tomorrow, and you don't get the ten per cent."

"Um," said Cibeles said and hung up.

Alvaro checked in the El Rancho under the name of Winkle and told the clerk that he was expecting a very important business call and to

buzz him no mater what the time of night. Then he walked to a small restaurant next door to the motel and ate, returned to the office and bought a copy of every magazine it had, and went to his room. He eyed the guests in the pool wistfully, then shut and locked the door, turned up the air conditioner, and stripped to his shorts. He placed the pistol under his pillow and sat on the bed, reading for the rest of the afternoon.

The four-thirty movie on the television starred Dick Powell and was about a wise-cracking ace crime reporter during the depression. Alvaro almost went to sleep.

Rasmussen kicked in the door at a little after seven.

"Freeze," he ordered, leveling his revolver at Alvaro, and Alvaro froze half out of his sitting position, his hands gripping the sides of the bed.

Rasmussen stumbled into the room, half dead. He'd managed to throw a shirt around him, but he'd buttoned it unevenly and his blood stained the material. His pants were dirty, especially around the knee where he'd fallen and crawled. His face had the same ivory hue to it that Alvaro had seen before, but his eyes — his eyes were what gripped Alvaro. They were like torches. Like flickering reflections of a cat's irises shining in the dark. Like there was nothing inside Rasmussen except raging hate.

"Took me . . . a while," he said, gasping for breath. "I found you."

"Sam—"

"All the money gone," Rasmussen continued. "You have it." The revolver wavered slightly, but still pointed at Alvaro. Rasmussen took a couple of steps and groped for the bed post for support. "You ran out on me. Left me to die."

"Sammy, please," Alvaro said. He licked dry lips. "I can explain, Sammy. I—"

"Called Cibeles. Knew you'd still have to deal with him. He told me — where —" Rasmussen ended in a fit of coughing, his eyes clenched shut. Alvaro inched a hand toward the pillow. "Damn you, Jack," Rasmussen said. "Tell me where the mon—"

"Hey!"

A sudden loud shout came from behind Rasmussen, from the open doorway. Rasmussen half-turned, startled. A man, a guest of the motel, was standing on the cement walk outside, and behind him was a woman, still in her bathing suit. "Hey, mister, what the hell—"

Alvaro grabbed his revolver and threw himself off the bed. Rasmussen turned and fired, the shot sounded like a cannon in the small room. The bedside lamp shattered. Alvaro raised his gun over the edge of the bed, sighted quickly, and fired. Rasmussen's eyes opened very wide and then he lurched forward as though he'd been hit in the stomach with a fist. He made the same odd rattling sound in his throat that the guard had when shot, and then he toppled over on his knees. He was dead by



the time he had flattened out on the carpet.

The woman was screaming and the motel manager burst through.

"What's going on?" he asked loudly. "What the devil's going on?"

Alvaro stood up slowly from behind the bed. He saw his chances of running, of grabbing his clothes and making it to his car, were nil, what with the crowd around his door. He was going to have to bluff it out.

"He broke in here," he said, shaking his head in wonderment. "Broke in and demanded I drive him out of town. He was crazy. Plumb crazy."

The man who had shouted was nodding his head. "That's right. That's exactly what happened. I heard the door crash in, and when I arrived, that man was waving his gun and demanding money. I heard it, I did."

The motel manager looked at Alvaro. "I better call the police." He didn't sound too happy about the idea.

"I didn't want to shoot him," Alvaro said.

"Don't feel bad," the man said. "It was self-defense, it was. I saw the whole thing, I did, and it was self-defense."

Alvaro was dressed by the time the squad car arrived. Two cops, one large and fat, and the other just as large but not quite so fat, radioed for an ambulance and then interrogated everybody. Alvaro, as Winkle, kept his story simple and the man who had yelled stayed and backed him up.

As the man had said, it was self-defense. A crazed gunman had burst in, threatened to kill poor Mr. Winkle unless he was driven out of town. He had picked Winkle at random, Winkle having never seen the man before, and when he had been distracted by the guest's shout, Winkle had shot him.

"I'm a salesman for Conklin and Blythe, hardware," Alvaro explained when asked. "On the road a lot, and I've carried that gun for years just in case something like this should happen. I feel safer with it, being all alone."

"Is the gun registered?" the fat cop asked.

"Well, no," Alvaro said and shook his head sadly.

"I think you had better come with us, Mr. Winkle," the not-so-fat one said.

The station house was a two-story, grimy sandstone cube. Upstairs, down a hall of battered green lock-

ers and frosted glass doors, was the squad room. It overlooked the precinct garage and was mostly of wood; wood walls, floor, desks, and chairs. About the only things which weren't wood were the filing cabinets the water cooler, the two cops, and Alvaro.

Alvaro sat beside one desk talking to the fat cop, while the other one made phone calls at a desk on the far side of the room. Alvaro had expected this detainment and wasn't particularly worried about it. His cover as Ronald Winkle was good. He'd spent too much money over the years for it not to be. The phone numbers in his wallet would check out, and in a little while they'd let him go.

The police could charge him with carrying an unregistered weapon, and perhaps concealment, but he doubted that they would. Rasmussen would soon be identified as one of the bank robbers, and that would make Alvaro, as Winkle, something of a hero to the public, if not to the cops.

A second reason, a reason slightly more obscure to the average man, lay in the fact that Alvaro's gun was a standard service revolver. If it had been an odd type, like a Beretta, it would have been of no use to the police, but as it was, well—he'd caught the covetous eye the fat cop had given it and the sorry shape the cop's own handgun was in. He knew where his revolver would go as soon as he left the station

house, and he smiled inwardly at the thought. It wasn't a bribe, exactly; call it an unspoken understanding.

It was attention to all the possibilities which made Alvaro the pro that he was, and he knew it.

So he relaxed, though inwardly he continued to play the part of a nervous, bumbling hardware peddler whose biggest crime was padding his expense account. One of the numbers he'd supplied didn't answer, and he was told to wait. He knew which one it was; the theoretical Mr. Conklin, and Hymie Bernard, the theoretical Mr. Conklin, was out at the race track at this hour. He gave his statement and the fat one typed it up and he signed it, and still Hymie Bernard wasn't home.

Alvaro was told to sit in another chair, and time passed. A third cop came in and was promptly sent out again for sandwiches and coffee. The two cops ignored Alvaro, sitting at their desks and typing or answering the few phone calls, and occasionally the not-so-fat one would try to reach Mr. Conklin.

Alvaro ate his tuna fish-on-rye and drank from his container of coffee and wondered if Bernard had won at the track for the first time in his life and wouldn't be back until he'd drank all his winnings. He hoped not. He wanted to get to his motel room and Cibeles' phone call.

Finally the not-so-fat cop hung up the phone, frowning as he did, and walked over to his partner. They

talked for a moment and then motioned Alvaro to come over and sit down.

"Have you heard from Mr. Conklin yet?" Alvaro asked.

"No, we haven't."

"Well, I sure wish you'd take my word for who I am and let me leave."

"You seem to check out to be Mr. Winkle, all right."

"Then can I go?" Alvaro started to rise.

"Sit down," the not-so-fat cop said. "We still are concerned about the gun, Mr. Winkle."

"Oh, I never want to see that thing again," Alvaro said, shivering. "No, you officers can have it."

"We planned on keeping it" the fat one said. "But you might be interested to know that we have received a call from ballistics."

"Ballistics?"

"Yes," the other one said. "That was the call just now. The man you shot was one of the robbers who held up the Eastern National Exchange Bank. The bullets from his gun match the one taken from the guard who was shot."

"No!" Alvaro exclaimed, his eyes wide.

"Ballistics reported another interesting fact, though."

"Yes?" It was almost a whisper.

The not-so-fat cop eyed Alvaro with a hound-dog expression. "They found that both slugs taken from the robber's body were fired from the same gun."

Alvaro slumped back in his chair. The area between his shoulder blades suddenly grew very cold and clammy.

"Did you hear me, Mr. Winkle?" the cop asked, his voice tight and hard. "Both bullets came from the same gun. Would you explain how a gun used in the robbery came into your possession? Would you please, Mr. Winkle?"

Alvaro knew the answer, but he couldn't speak. He realized with frantic despair what must have happened during the scuffle at the bank. He had gotten the guard's service revolver instead of his own, and the guard had just shot Rasmussen. The revolver was so like his, he never noticed.

So damnably similar —

Alvaro was a pro. He had thought of all the angles, including the use of standard weapons. He stared up at the policeman's looming face and saw the almost malicious smirk on his lips.

Alvaro was a pro. He knew when they had him cold.

The Only MAGAZINE featuring MIKE SHAYNE every month.



THE GAMBLERS

by
**CARROLL
MAYERS**

It was only a two-bit poker game. But for one of us the stakes were very high indeed. High—like sudden death . . .

WHEN ED SCULLY was hospitalized with an attack of hepatitis, the rest of us—Charlie Tipton, Jason Hollender and myself—called off our poker session for that week. The postponement didn't affect Jason or me too much, but it left Charlie unhappy.

Like the rest of us, Charlie had only modest means, maintaining a small novelty shop on the boardwalk that sold more trick items to kids than profitable souvenir pieces to adults. Ed Scully was desk clerk at the Manor House, Jason owned

the town drug store, and I ran a gas station.

But Charlie did love to bet—on anything. He played all the sports pools, bought every lottery ticket that came along. He'd give you your own odds on—say, the next guest to register with Ed would have a double letter in his name. Or that the next car to wheel into my station would have a seven in its license number.

Overall, though, poker was Charlie's purest passion, so cancellation

of that week's conclave was a keen disappointment.

Not that we abandoned our get-together completely. Seaview, while only some forty minutes' drive down-coast from the state capital, was yet to be fully embraced by the tourist and vacation set, and thus wasn't exactly a mecca for pulse-speeding activity. Any change in routine being welcome, Jason, Charlie and I decided to still meet, drink some beer, have a quiet bull session.

We met, all right, but the session immediately took an unexpected turn. Charlie was hosting, and his eyes glinted with excitement behind thick lenses as he ushered Jason and me into the neat living quarters behind his shop.

"Guess who I saw out on the pier this afternoon?"

I smiled at his eagerness. "The President?"

"Nope."

Jason followed my implausible lead.

"The way your glasses are fogging up, it must have been somebody more aesthetic," he told Charlie. "I say, Raquel Welch in a bikini."

Charlie grinned briefly, then sobered.

"It was Vic Bascomb," he informed us. "I recognized him from news photos."

Jason's brows arced. "The racketeer?"

"Not racketeer; *gambler*," Charlie corrected. "Racketeer's just a newspaper tag."

Jason shook his head.

"Not necessarily," he said. "In the capital, where Bascomb operates, they think he's more than just a gambler. They've even formed a citizens' committee to investigate his activities. From the drug angle, particularly."

Charlie shrugged. "That still doesn't mean he's a racketeer. Nothing's been proved."

Jason eyed me.

"You're suggesting something," he told Charlie.

"I sure am," Charlie agreed. "I'm suggesting we ask Bascomb to sit in with us. He's obviously down here for a rest; and would have the time." His grin came back. "What a kick that would be—playing poker with Vic Bascomb!"

I said, "You can't be serious."

"Why can't I?"

"Jason's just told you; the man's a racketeer—" I stopped as Charlie bridled. "A suspected racketeer," I amended. "Besides, even if he weren't, he's a thousand miles out of our league."

Jason backed my contention. "He'd laugh at the mere suggestion."

Charlie's jaw set. "We'll never know until we ask him."

Jason sighed, again looked at me. "He really means it."

"The whole idea's preposterous," I said.

"Maybe, maybe not," Charlie countered stubbornly. "I say it again: it'd be a thrill for the three of us, playing with him."

I grunted. "And I say, like Jason, he'll laugh in your face when you ask him."

Charlie demurred. "Not me. You."

"Me?"

Charlie nodded. "You can talk rings around Jason and me." He gave me a confident smile. "If Bascomb's to be persuaded, you're the man to do it."

His smile suggested he thought he was winning me over, but I had news for him.

"If you think I'm broaching any such ridiculous idea to Vic Bascomb, you're crazy," I informed Charlie.

He wasn't fazed. "What have you got to lose?" he asked.

"I don't know," I said. "Probably nothing. But I don't intend to pursue the question."

"Admit it, Floyd. Wouldn't you get a kick—"

"No, I wouldn't," I cut Charlie short. "Now, let's drop this wild talk and get out the beer. The subject's closed."

But the subject wasn't closed and, subconsciously, I knew it. The possibility of sitting at a poker table with a professional gambler such as Vic Bascomb, regardless of his alleged underworld affiliation, did hold an intriguing aspect. More, in planting the seed, Charlie quite likely had known it would. And still more, the longer I considered the whole business, the greater the appeal grew.

Whatever, the following afternoon

I let my teenage assistant handle the filling station for an hour while I sauntered over to Seaview's single recreational pier. There was a fair crowd around the concessions, the usual coterie of fishermen and crabbers at the far end. Midway, lolling on a bench and appraising the wispy beach wear of the opposite sex undulating on the sands below, I spotted Vic Bascomb.

As had Charlie, I recognized the gambler from news pictures. He was a heavy-set individual with dark hair slicked straight back, fleshy features. Another man shared the bench with Bascomb, a rangy character with a blond crewcut. Both men wore slacks, sports shirts.

I'd formulated a gambit of sorts. Approaching, I paused, nodded pleasantly and said, "Enjoying the scenery, Mr. Bascomb?"

The subtle flattery of recognition scored. Bascomb exhibited no undue gratification, but a tight smile flickered briefly. "We've met?"

"No," I told him, "but when I recognized you, I wanted to say hello." I made my grin disparaging. "As amateur to master, you might say."

I let the inference hang; again, Bascomb's interest was restrained, but he did question my implication. "You gamble, Mr. —"

"Parrish," I said, "Floyd Parrish. And the answer's no, not really. It's just that a few friends and myself . . ." I trailed off, then as if on inspiration, added, "We're sort of

poker fanciers. You wouldn't be interested?"

"I don't believe so, Mr. Parrish."

"It's just a friendly session. We'd be pleased to have you join us."

The gambler's head shake was impersonal. "Some other time, perhaps. This week, my associate and I are just relaxing."

Close up, 'associate' seemed a slick euphemism for 'hood.' Beneath his youthful crewcut, Bascomb's companion's forty-year-old eyes were bleak with a suggestion of arrogance. If the man had been wearing a jacket, I felt there would have been a shoulder rig and artillery beneath his left armpit.

At the moment, though, character appraisal didn't fully concern me. I was losing my invitational ploy and I sensed it.

"It would be sort of an honor for us," I stressed, opening the flattery throttle full blast.

Bascomb still declined.

"But I do appreciate the offer," he said. "Thank your friends for their consideration."

Well, that was that; I'd registered a fat zero. I murmured, "Of course," and moved on down the pier.

I was more annoyed with myself than with Bascomb, as I could appreciate the gambler's refusal. Taking up with some penny-ante poker buffs, even as a vacation interlude, held not the slightest interest. On the other hand, Charlie's opinion notwithstanding, where had I gotten

the idea I could spark such an interest?

I lingered for about a quarter-hour, watching the fishermen and crabbers, then started back. I meant to pass Bascomb without further comment, but as I neared their bench the gambler suddenly beckoned.

"I've reconsidered your invitation, Mr. Parrish," he said. "It appears we have nothing definite scheduled for this evening." He paused, manufactured that tight smile again. "Mr. Lesko, here, doesn't play, but if you're meeting tonight and you'd still care to have me sit in—"

I felt a glow of accomplishment; I had scored after all.

"As I said, it will be our pleasure and tonight will be fine," I told Bascomb. "I'll pick you up around eight-thirty. Where are you staying?"

He made a casual gesture. "We're at the Breakers Motel, but don't trouble yourself. We'll drive ourselves."

"As you wish," I assented, and gave him the location of Charlie's shop. My parting smile included associate Lesko, who matched it, if only briefly.

As I left the pier, a voice I knew spoke my name. Sheriff Ned Durfee was leaning against a boardwalk concession, munching a hot dog. He wiped a trace of mustard from a leathery cheek, gray eyes keen as I approached. "Slumming, Floyd?"

"Eh?"

He jerked his head toward the

pier. "Noticed you chatting with Vic Bascomb and his man." Ned's words were easy, but strong disapproval laced his tone. I decided not to mention the reason for my chat.

"I just happened to recognize him," I said, "so I said hello. He's obviously a visitor to our fair hamlet."

The sheriff's disfavor became more evident.

"And one I'd as soon be without," he said heavily. "Ten to one the man's organization is behind the marijuana and heroin that's beginning to filter in here." He gave the last bite of his snack a hard chomp. "Under the circumstances, though, with no evidence and with him just lolling around, what can I do?"

I felt obliged to nod my understanding, although my discomfiture increased. Without question, Ned would regard our impending fraternization with Vic Bascomb in a sour light.

"Not much, I guess," I conceded.

Ned hardly heard me. He was again glaring in the direction of Bascomb's bench.

"I'd give my big toe to trip him up—on anything," he muttered.

"Yes. Well, I've got to get along," I said. "See you, Ned." I made my departure as discreet as possible.

On my way back to the station, I stopped by, gave Charlie the news. He was, of course, practically ecstatic; he immediately phoned Jason, relayed the glad tidings.

"Imagine!" he enthused. "The



three of us playing poker with Vic Bascomb. One of us might even beat him!"

"You'd better settle for just playing," I suggested. "Aside from his ability, the man can afford to bid up any pot until we all fold."

Charlie didn't concur. "I don't think he will," he said. "He'll appreciate the circumstances, and he'll play on our level."

"We'll see," I said.

Jason didn't drive. I picked him up and we reached Charlie's place at eight-twenty-that-night. Bascomb and his associate arrived a quarter-hour later in a sleek Caddy conver-

tible. Lesko, not a poker buff as Bascomb had mentioned, asked directions, then drove on to kill the evening at the town movie. The rest of us, after a round of light chatter, retired to Charlie's living quarters, where our host genially produced cards, chips, got the evening's festivities under way.

"We usually play a straight game, Mr. Bascomb," Charlie explained. "No real limit, but generally a dollar or so, so nobody gets hurt much. That okay with you?"

The gambler settled into his chair. "Whatever you prefer," he agreed.

So the business at hand proceeded. I took the first pot on two pair, bluffing Jason out of three tens when Bascomb and Charlie both dropped. The second round went to Jason, who beat Charlie's challenge of a queen-high straight with a heart flush. Bascomb scored next over all three of us with a full house.

From those shakedown hands, the dual pattern for the evening gradually evolved: first, as Charlie predicted, Bascomb stayed on our level, made no attempt to steamroller the bidding. At ease, the gambler exhibited a relaxed game, but not at all condescending.

The second point was more subtle: Jason and I were in the game, but basically only to bid perfunctorily, occasionally take a minor pot, more often throw in. The crux of the evening, the true rivalry, was between Charlie and Bascomb. Hand after hand, they opposed each other.

Bascomb, cool, almost phlegmatic, playing easily. And Charlie, straining, beginning to sweat over every deal, wanting desperately to beat the professional—and not doing it.

To give him his due, Charlie managed to muster good grace. After two hours, his only overt act of frustration came when he abruptly tossed in a hand with a wry grimace, muttered, "Maybe I should do like you pros, Mr. Bascomb, and call for a new deck."

Bascomb nodded agreeably. "Your privilege," he said.

Charlie gave the gambler a sharp look, hesitated, then shoved back his chair.

"Darned if I won't try it," he announced, including Jason and me in his gaze. "Maybe it'll change all our luck."

A moment later, he'd fetched a fresh pack from the shop.

That action was the turning point of the session. Jason's fortune was no better—nor was mine. But Charlie's was, miraculously so. After only a few hands, Charlie began to win again. He bested Bascomb's three of a kind, tens over eights; he stayed with me when I tried to back him down with two pair; he nicked Bascomb's jack high straight with one of his own, queen up.

When we finally called a halt as Lesko returned from the movie, Charlie was the winner, into me for ten-fifty, Jason for eight, and Bascomb for about twelve. Of course, Charlie did his best to play down

his jubilation at coming off top-dog with the professional as he set out a modest spread of cold cuts and beer.

"Just my night, is all, Mr. Bascomb."

The gambler sipped his brew. "Win one night, lose the next."

Charlie nodded. "Like I said."

Bascomb put down his glass. "Please don't break up on our account."

Charlie hated to terminate his moment of triumph. "It's early yet, Mr. Bascomb—"

The gambler checked his watch. "We're returning to the capital tomorrow." He glanced at his associate. "I think we'll leave, Joe."

"Whenever you're ready," Lesko said.

Bascomb stood up. "It's been an enjoyable evening," he told Charlie. He turned, included Jason and me in his appreciation. "My pleasure, gentlemen. Good night."

After Charlie had seen his guests off, I started to make a true dent in the refreshments, but Jason stopped me abruptly. "Hold it a minute, Floyd."

"Huh?"

"I think Charlie's got something to tell us."

I eyed Charlie, looked back at Jason. "You're losing me."

"But not our host," Jason suggested mildly. "I began to suspect, watched closely all through that winning streak."

Charlie didn't look at either of

us. He'd slumped on a chair at Jason's initial intimation, all his exultation vanished. Suddenly, he blurted, "I had to beat Bascomb! I just had to!"

"So you changed decks," Jason said, "brought in a trick pack from the shop."

"Yes. From a kid's magic set." Charlie's voice died as he studied the carpeting. "I meant to tell you and Floyd afterward, of course, return your money."

Comprehension was finally flooding me. "You mean, we were playing with marked cards?" I demanded. "You worked in a marked deck on Vic Bascomb—" I broke off, finished lamely, "For Pete's sake, Charlie, you didn't beat Bascomb that way. Not really."

"But I wanted him to think so" Charlie bit his lips. "All right. I was wrong. It was a damn fool thing to do. I'll get to Bascomb in the morning before he leaves, and give him back what he lost."

On that rather strained note, we broke up. I drove Jason home, neither of us commenting too much on the evening's denouement. Knowing Charlie so well, we could appreciate the motivation for his stunt, however wry.

It had been a long day. At my own place, I was heading straight for bed when the phone rang. On the line, Jason sounded disturbed:

"You still up, Floyd?"

"I was just starting to undress."

"We've got to talk some more about tonight."

"You and I?"

"And Charlie. I've already called him. He's waiting for you."

I said, "What's the trouble?"

Jason didn't want me delaying.

"I'll explain when you get here," he said and hung up.

I could have been irritated, but I wasn't. Jason wouldn't be taking this tack unless he was convinced he had a mighty good reason. I shrugged back into my clothes, got my car rolling again. Charlie was as much at sea as I when I picked him up, but we didn't bother with idle speculation. Jason would clue us in soon enough.

Charlie traded a guilty glance with me but ventured no comment. Jason told him, "Your working in that deck wasn't too subtle. Neither was your subsequent winning streak. As I said before, I found myself suspecting the truth about both bits."

"But now you've carried it further," I put in. "You're speculating why a professional, experienced gambler like Bascomb wouldn't have done the same."

"Exactly," Jason said. "Bascomb hardly could have missed Charlie's ploy. Why didn't he call it?"

Charlie sighed. "Maybe because he read me like a book," he said ruefully, "but went along regardless, not wanting to spoil my evening."

"Maybe," Jason agreed. "And maybe it was more than that. What's your opinion of Joe Lesko, Floyd?"

"Hood, prime species," I said.

Jason nodded. "I've checked tonight's movie ad in the paper. Can either of you imagine a man like Lesko sitting through a double feature of *Beach Blanket Baby* and *Surfing Swingers?*"

Charlie frowned again. "You're saying he didn't?"

"I am," Jason said. "Lesko probably went to the movie, bought a ticket, went inside. But he didn't stay. He slipped out, drove up to the capital. The movie bit gave him a cover for some three hours; an alibi he couldn't actually prove, but one that couldn't readily be disproven, either. And one the three of us would tacitly have to confirm."

Fifteen minutes later, in his comfortable apartment over the drug store, Jason faced us soberly. "You are both wondering what this is all about, so I assume neither of you caught the news on radio or TV tonight?"

I hadn't; neither, it appeared, had Charlie.

"I did," Jason said. "I switched on the TV for the late newscast after Floyd brought me home. It seems that upstate in the capital a man named Quigley was shot twice as he left his home shortly before ten o'clock tonight. Fortunately, neither bullet was fatal, but the gunman was unrecognized, managed to escape."

Jason paused, then added, "Quigley's a crusading journalist who's been spearheading that citizen com-

mittee's investigation into Vic Bascomb's activities."

Jason's intimation began to filter through.

I said, "Then you believe—?"

"I believe we were set up. I believe our whole evening was rigged."

Charlie frowned. "Spell it out, huh?"

"Think it over with me," Jason said. "For openers, let's review Floyd's invitation to Bascomb." He eyed me for confirmation. "At first he wasn't interested?"

"That's right."

"But a few minutes later, he was. He stopped you as you were leaving the pier, accepted."

I said, "He mentioned something about realizing he had a free evening."

"All right," Jason said. "Let's pass over that and consider the crux of the evening, Charlie's marked deck."

I followed Jason completely now. So, I recognized, did Charlie. Seaview was only a forty-mile drive from the capital. Driving the powerful Caddy, Lesko would have had time to spare. Up and back, plus the shooting attempt, would not have taken two hours at the outside. A period Lesko could claim he'd been at the movie.

"Quigley's killing would stall, perhaps completely abort that citizens' investigation," Jason finished. "Bascomb undoubtedly had considered the action, but he couldn't risk it himself, could entrust the job only

to his number one man, and he recognized Lesko would immediately be suspect. After that unexpected poker invitation this afternoon, though, Bascomb had an inspiration for a slick gamble of his own, a gamble with a built-in alibi.

He, playing cards all evening with us, and Lesko only a block or two away at the movie. Once he'd established that setup, he couldn't risk a break-up of the game by denouncing Charlie's stunt."

It all held together, but there was no specific proof. I suggested as much.

"No, there isn't," Jason said tightly, "but I still think the sheriff should learn the whole story tonight."

Telling Ned Durfee the whole story, particularly our evening's association, wasn't too appealing. But Jason was right, of course:

The sheriff's office was annexed to the town hall. Ned Durfee, a fellow bachelor, maintained quarters in the rear. He'd retired, but roused readily. His manner, however, chilled perceptibly when he'd heard Jason's exposition.

"So you were just saying hello to Bascomb?" he told me acidly.

"It's my fault," Charlie interposed. "Floyd set up the session because of me."

Ned waved him short, finished dressing.

"I'm not concerned with whose fault," he said. "If Jason's correct—and he could well be—Bascomb

and Lesko are guilty of attempted murder. I'd give anything to help the capital authorities nail them."

He broke off, tautly reflective.

"The gun," he muttered.

Jason said, "Lesko's gun?"

"Yes," Durfee said. "Under the circumstances, the cover they'd rigged, Lesko may have felt cocky, may not have ditched his weapon. If we can recover it and the ballistics boys match its slugs with those removed from Quigley's body—"

He strapped on his revolver.

"All right," he told us simply, "we'll play it out."

We made the Breakers Motel in five minutes, Ned following us in his official car. We didn't know the unit, but Bascomb's Caddy, pulled into the adjacent carport, tabbed it. The lights still burned. Under Ned's direction, I rapped on the door.

Bascomb himself answered. Over his shoulder I glimpsed Lesko stretched out on one of the twin beds with a sports magazine. Bascomb built a small smile as he recognized his hosts of the evening.

"This is a surprise, gentlemen." Then, as he spotted Ned Durfee backing us up, he added, "Something, Sheriff?"

Ned pushed forward. "Something," he echoed bluntly. "I'm taking you and your man in for the attempted killing of a reporter named Quigley in the capital tonight."

Bascomb held on to his smile. "You're talking nonsense, Sheriff."

"I think not," Ned countered. "I won't bother to spell out your play. I'll just cite your rights and tell you we're going to take this room apart for the gun your hood used."

On the bed, Lesko slowly put down his magazine. Bascomb's ease continued. "There's no gun."

"We'll see," Ned said. He turned to me. "Start looking, Floyd. Try Lesko's luggage." Then he added to Bascomb, "And don't tell me I need a warrant."

Bascomb shrugged. "I could," he suggested mildly, "but be our guests."

Bascomb's aplomb was hard to take. Ned was going out on a limb. If there was no gun, if Lesko had played it safe all the way by getting rid of the weapon—

I fumbled through Lesko's suitcase beside his bed. No artillery. I switched to Bascomb's bag. Again, no gun.

Bascomb said, "Like I said, Sheriff—"

Ned's leathery features were set; he pawed Bascomb's luggage himself.

"Check the mattresses," he told me, "and the dresser drawers."

Jason moved forward.

"Take it slower, Ned," he said, "you might miss something." As he spoke, he in turn fingered the moment, he turned toward the contents of Bascomb's bag. Another sheriff, several glassine packets in his hand.

Bascomb's fleshy face reddened.

"It's a frame! A plant!" he swore softly. Then he lunged at Jason.

"Hold it!" Ned barked, revolver sweeping into his fist to cover both Bascomb and Lesko in one fluid motion. Then, as the pair froze, he said quietly, "I don't operate with frames, mister."

Bascomb and his hood were fuming. The sheriff plucked one of the packets from Jason's hand, tore it open with his teeth and tongued the contents. Taut satisfaction glinted in his gaze as he spat.

"Heroin," he said, "the stuff that's been filtering in here."

That did it. Naturally, Bascomb maintained his violent disclaimer, but he wasn't convincing enough. And while the authorities never did come up with any gun to definitely link Lesko with the attempted murder of journalist Quigley, Jason's theory of the evening's setup, plus the angle of narcotics possession, was sufficient to hold Bascomb and his hood until the citizens' committee turned its findings over to the grand jury. After which Bascomb's organization was broken up and the racketeer himself salted away for a lengthy stretch.

Finding that heroin in Bascomb's luggage was the clincher. I've often thought about that. Certainly Ned Durfee didn't rig a plant. I know I didn't. And Charlie hadn't even touched anything in the motel room. But if Bascomb hadn't possessed the stuff, if his protest was legitimate, that left only Jason Hollender.

Think about it. Jason's a druggist, might very well have had the heroin in his lawful narcotics supply. If so, on the possibility any play Ned might make could wash out, Jason could have thought ahead, could have taken along those packets just in case. An insurance ploy, you might say.

Charlie most likely thought about the possibility. Surely Ned Durfee has. But as far as I know, the sheriff's never come right out and questioned Jason. Probably Ned figures nailing Vic Bascomb was the main thing, even if Lady Justice may have peeked from beneath her blindfold and kinda carefully tipped the scales a little.

Whatever, if Jason *did* assay a discreet gamble of his own, he hit the jackpot—and that's all a gambling man wants, eh?



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THE SUGAR MAN

*Blackmail's price? Fear . . .
hate . . . maybe a little Murder.*

by

EDWARD D. HOCH

FOR AS LONG as anyone could remember there'd been a Sugar Man. He came once a week, or sometimes twice, stopping for just a few moments at each of the base-



ments and garages along Bleary watching the action, collecting his tribute, and then moving on.

For Mike Common, the Sugar Man was a necessary evil, an expense of the business to be figured in, along with the heat and light equipment. But that did not mean that Mike had ever completely resigned himself to the Sugar Man's presence.

Mike was especially disturbed when the Sugar man chose to pay his periodic visits on a Friday or Saturday night, when the action in the basement might be reaching a fever pitch with the visit of a few plungers from downtown society.

This was often true after midnight on weekends, with women in evening gowns and men in tuxedos kneeling about the blanket as if in prayer, slapping down wrinkled hundred-dollar bills and rolling the dice with measured abandon.

And often, in the midst of it, Clare would come down from the kitchen and say, "The Sugar Man's here."

And Mike Common would sigh, glance at the circle of intent shooters, and say the only thing that he could: "Send him down."

The Sugar Man's name was spelled like the city in Australia, and no one seemed to know whether it was his first or last name, or if indeed he had any other. He was a tall man, a bit overweight but not really fat, and there was about his expression a constant intentness, as

if he were calculating his percentages, or listening for a distant sire

Men said there was evil in Sydney's eyes, and that he carried spring knife with a six-inch blade. Seeing him come down the steps the basement, Mike Common could have believed almost anything about him.

Sydney never removed the grosgrain bowler or unbuttoned his topcoat, and Mike didn't object because that at least gave the impression of a brief visit that would be finished soon.

"How've you been, Sydney?" asked, not really interested but trying for a casual approach. He acted the same toward the school bully who used to catch him on the way home when he was eleven years old. "You're looking good."

Sydney glanced over at the circle of well-dressed men and women, his eyes intent as he calculated Mike's probable share of the night's action.

"I feel fine, Mike," he answered at last. "Just fine." Looks as you've got a nice crowd here tonight."

Mike tried to shrug casually. "Just the usual weekend people."

Sydney glanced at the blanket, a blonde in a strapless gown rolled a seven and let loose a little squawk of joy.

"There was better than a thousand dollars riding on that one, Mike," he said, speaking in tones. "Is that usual?"

"Comes and goes."

Sydney smiled as the girl lost on the next roll and passed the dice. The whole street's jumping togh. I just came from Max's ga-ge. He's crowded."

"Yeah?" Mike took out a cigarette and lit it, beginning to feel bit nervous. "So do you want the gar? The usual amount?" He osed his hand around the envelope in his pocket. It held twenty indred-dollar bills, the week's pay-f to Sydney.

"I want to talk a little first, ike," he said, sending a chill down ike's spine. "How about your of-e, where we won't be disturbed?"

"Sure."

Mike closed the door behind em, shutting out the growing din om the game. Sydney sat down on e of the old wooden chairs from e kitchen.

"You should really fix this place , Mike," he said, a bit too kindly. Comfortable arm chairs and things. en Max's garage is coming ong."

"Can't afford it," Mike answered, ing off the words.

"Come, come! Remember me? I e the sort of business you do out ere. The talk on the street's that u're even thinking of expanding, ding a poker table and maybe en a wheel. You've got the space wn here."

The chill was back on Mike's ne. He wondered who in hell had d Sydney about it. Not that he

could have hoped to keep such a layout a secret from the Sugar Man. But he'd been hoping for a little more time.

"That's just talk," he said. "Nothing definite."

"Still," Sydney said, spreading his fingers on the desk between them, "perhaps the time might be right to raise the fee—say, to three thousand a week."

"What?" Mike felt his muscles tighten. "You're out of your mind! I don't have that kind of money! I can hardly afford the two grand you milk me out of every week. You're nuts! Go to hell! I don't have to pay it!"

"Oh, come now. Don't get excited. I'm your friend, not your enemy." Sydney's eyes seemed to glisten a little as he spoke. "I don't want to put you out of business. Think about it. I'll come again in a few days. Just think about it." He got to his feet and started for the door. Then, as if as an after-thought, he held out his hand. "Oh, the envelope, please!"

Mike Common handed over the two thousand dollars and then watched in silence as the Sugar Man went up the steps to the street.

Later, while he was counting up the house's profit on the night's games, Clare joined him with a beer. "How'd we do?" she asked.

"Good. Better than a thousand." He stopped counting to look up at her, taking in the sequin-dotted

jacket and velvet skirt she wore for her songs. He'd discovered long ago that a girl singing and playing the piano added a touch of class that the society folks liked. It cost him nothing, and Clare liked the work.

"You'll be the biggest operator on the street pretty soon," she told him. "With the wheel and the card layouts . . ."

"The Sugar Man heard about them. He wants another thousand every week."

"Another thousand!"

"I won't pay it." He felt a fury at the system that allowed the Sugar Man to exist. Some said the position was given by the police to the highest bidder, and at times Mike Common was inclined to believe that. Certainly the cops never bothered them here on the block, but the price of safety was becoming too high.

"We could afford it, Mike," she said, leaning over him to stroke his cheek. When she did it, her long blonde hair fell against his face.

"Sure we could. But he'd want another thousand after that when we moved the new equipment in. There'd be no end to it."

"What can you do? Complain to the cops?"

"No. But I can do something. Kill him, maybe."

"You couldn't kill a fly, Mike."

He didn't answer her, because he knew it was true.

The Sugar Man came again three nights later, when Mike's basement game was deserted except for a few neighborhood types who preferred the uncluttered atmosphere of the Monday evening action. He stood against the wall for a time, smiling and watching the dollar bets flutter across the blanket, until finally Mike joined him.

"You want a cut of this action, Sydney?" he asked. "I'm glad you come around once in a while to the bad nights."

"I cry for you, Mike. Where can we talk?"

In your office?"

Mike led the way and Sydney settled into the same chair he'd had the previous Friday night.

"It's no more comfortable," Mike told him, noticing the pain expression.

"Have you thought over my suggestion of the other evening?"

"Sure, I've thought it over. I can't pay you any more than you're getting, at least not right now. Maybe after I get the new equipment in."

Sydney closed his eyes for a moment. "Come, come, Mike. What am I to do with you? I can live on promises! I have people to pay off too, you know."

Mike stood his ground behind the desk.

"Sorry," he said. "That's Two grand. Take it or leave it."

"Mike, Mike! Do you want t

lice down here every night? Do you want bricks and things falling in your classy society folks on their way home? It could be awfully bad for business, Mike. Your place would get a bad name. They'd all start going to Max's instead."

"Get out!"

He stood up, smiling. "Think out it, Mike. That's all I ask. I'd have the three thousand for me Friday night."

After he'd gone, Mike Common sat at his desk for a long time, head buried in his hands. He was taking a decision, and he wanted be sure it was the right one. Clare was at the piano the next afternoon, running through some new songs.

"Mike?" she called to him.

"What is it?"

"I've written a little blues song about the Sugar Man. Want to hear it?"

"Not particularly."

She smiled and started in anyway. "*Sugar Man, where are you from? Who can tell me whence you ne'er?*"

"That's great," Mike said. He was staring out the front window, waiting for somebody.

"There's more."

"Don't bother. Pretty soon nobody will care where he's from."

He hurried to open the side door, admitting a thin, shabby man with day's growth of beard.

"You're Mike Common?" The



man spoke with a trace of accent, shifting his gaze to avoid Mike's eyes.

"That's right. You're Karlo? I expected a bigger man."

The feet shifted uncertainly on the floor. "I can do the job. I've killed plenty people in my time." Behind him, Mike heard Clare gasp.

"Two thousand," Mike said, ignoring her. "I'll point him out to you Friday night. His name is Sydney."

"You want it done here?"

"Not inside. You'll have to get him out on the street somehow. About a block away would be good."

Karlo shot a quick glance at the piano. "Can you trust her?"

"I can trust her. Here's a hundred. You get the rest later."

The man nodded. "Friday night. I'll be here early."

Mike started to shake his hand, then thought better of it. "We'll

say you're a sailor," he told the man. "Can you wear a pea jacket or something like that?"

"Why a sailor?"

"A merchant seaman, something like that. Somebody just passing through."

"I get you," the man said. "Don't worry. Nobody'll connect you with the thing."

Mike let him out the side door and watched him disappear down the street. Perhaps Max or some of the others would see him, but that wouldn't matter. Mike would be doing them all a favor.

Clare was still at the piano when he returned.

"You're really going to do it," she softly, unbelieving.

"I couldn't do it myself, but this is different. Impersonal. Like bombing from the air during the war." He'd done that too, high above the clouds, not even able to see his targets except on a radar screen.

"What if this Karlo fails?"

"He won't. He's a good man." Mike poured himself a drink, then turned back to her. "I can't let him keep bleeding us, Clare. Not if I ever want to make something of this place. Hell, I'm not even asking the rest of them to kick in toward the cost. It's all on me." He sat on the bench by her side.

"And if they catch you? If Karlo talks?"

"He doesn't talk. Don't let his

looks fool you. He's the best in the business."

"It is a business with some people, isn't it?" There was a trouble look in her eyes.

"Sure. Just like the games a our business." He got to his feet. "Look, if it bothers you so muc call up Sydney and warn him. Tell him I'm going to have him kill Friday night."

"Don't be silly, Mike," she said and rose to meet his arms. "You know I'm with you. I've always been with you."

It was three days until Friday. He wondered how Sydney would be spending the time.

The crowd was slow arriving on Friday night, delayed by an early evening rain that left the street glistening and awash with puddles. Mike stood welcoming them at the side door until there were enough for the game to begin. Then he spread the blanket on the basement floor and opened a new package of dice. Upstairs, Clare was entertaining them at the piano but they were anxious to get started and she was soon alone.

"They're coming slow tonight," she commented.

"The rain's stopped. They'll be rolling in now."

Karlo came soon after they dressed like a merchant seaman, lounging against the wall to watch the game. He talked to no one, waiting for the signal.

At eleven o'clock, Mike began

have second thoughts, wondering if Sydney would really come, if Karlo would really do it, if.

But then the Sugar Man was ming down the basement steps, as he had a hundred times before, smiling slightly as he glanced over the crowd for familiar faces.

"You came," Mike said, keeping his voice flat an expressionless. "I came. Like God and Satan, am always with you. And the money?"

"Give me a few minutes to get together," Mike said. "Maybe I'd like to try your luck."

But Sydney shook his head. "I never gamble. The odds are too great." He did move over, though, stand behind a white-haired man in a business suit whom Mike knew as the president of a savings bank downtown.

Karlo worked his way over, taking through a haze of cigarette smoke. "That him?"

Mike gave a slight nod. "He'll give your money in his pocket. Don't come back here."

Then he went into his office and opened the envelope off the cluttered desk. The last payment. This is it.

Sydney glanced up as the dice led up against the blanketed wall, then fell back to rest on double zero.

"Eight's the point," someone said. Mike handed over the envelope. "Here's your money."

"Three?"

"Nineteen hundred. I'll have the rest tomorrow."

Sydney curled his lip as if to say something, but at that instant, Karlo managed to bump into him. "Sorry, mister. Didn't see you there."

"Watch where you're going," Sydney told him. "This isn't the high seas."

Karlo had unbuttoned his pea jacket, revealing a black turtleneck sweater below. "Don't you worry, mister. I got my sea legs. Just off a run to the Gulf and back. Oil tanker. Nothing like it."

Sydney grunted and tried to move away. "I'll see you later, Mike."

But Karlo was not to be put off. His hand came down on Sydney's arm. "Let me tell you, friend, of my days at sea. Even as a boy I would stand on the dock and watch the great cargo ships being loaded . . ."

"I must go," Sydney said. He broke free and started for the steps, but Karlo followed at his side. The dice shooters had ignored the entire exchange, though now glancing up Mike saw Clare white-faced in his office door.

"That's it," he said, walking over to her.

She was clinging to the door for support. "Mike, we can't go through with it. You're killing him, whether you do it yourself or not. It's murder!"

"Quiet!"

"Mike, I just phoned the cops." "What?"

"I told them there was a man being killed out in the alley. I didn't give my name."

He turned from her without another word and sprinted for the stairs. When he reached the damp night air he was blinded for a moment, unable to accustom his eyes to the darkness. Then he saw them, two inky blots behind Max's garage. They seemed locked in combat, but even as he watched there was a gasping sort of groan, like a deflating balloon, and one figure went down.

Mike drew a deep breath and started toward them, waiting to warn Karlo that the police were on their way. But he was still some feet away when Sydney's voice reached him.

"Stay back," he said. "I had to kill him." And then Mike saw the glisten of the switchblade knife still in his hand.

"What happened?" Mike managed to gasp.

Sydney picked up his hat from the damp earth. "I think he was trying to rob me. I knew he wasn't a real seaman when he said he stood on the dock watching the ships. Sailors always call it a pier. The dock is the place where the ship rests in the water." He glanced down at Karlo's body. "Anyway, I was ready for him."

And then, cutting through the

night like the voice of doom, the rising wail of the police sire reached them. "Sydney."

But there was some instinct in him still, some terrible drive of escape and survival. He was no longer the Sugar Man, but once more one of the hunted. Running forever running.

The police headlights pinned him in the street as he ran stumbling around the puddles that dotted the pavement like shell holes of some forgotten conflict.

Perhaps they shouted for him to stop, or perhaps they only saw the knife still gripped in his hand. At the last minute he turned as if to show them who he was, but then it was too late. The bullet cut him down, splattering into his body as he held the knife high in a gesture of ancient triumph.

He died there, in one of the pavement puddles, and after a time Mike Common walked back to the sidewalk where Clare stood. "That's it," he told her. "It's really ended now."

On Monday afternoon, while Mike Common was scrubbing down the basement floor, a little man with bushy black hair appeared at the top of the stairs. "Mr. Common?" he asked in a squeaky voice. "I wanted to introduce myself. I was a friend of Sydney's, and I'm taking over the block." He came slowly down the steps. "I'm the new Sugar Man."

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